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JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.



J O S E P H

AND

H I S B R E T H R E N .

BY THE
REV. JOHN L. ADAMSON,
MINISTER OF ST DAVID'S, DUNDEE,
Author of "Abraham, the Father of the Faithful."

"Not only in Nature, but in emergent events of Providence, God makes compensation to his own people for all the hostilities of accident; which is that solemn triumph that mercy makes over justice, when it rides upon a cloud, and crowns its darkness with a robe of glorious light."

JEREMY TAYLOR.

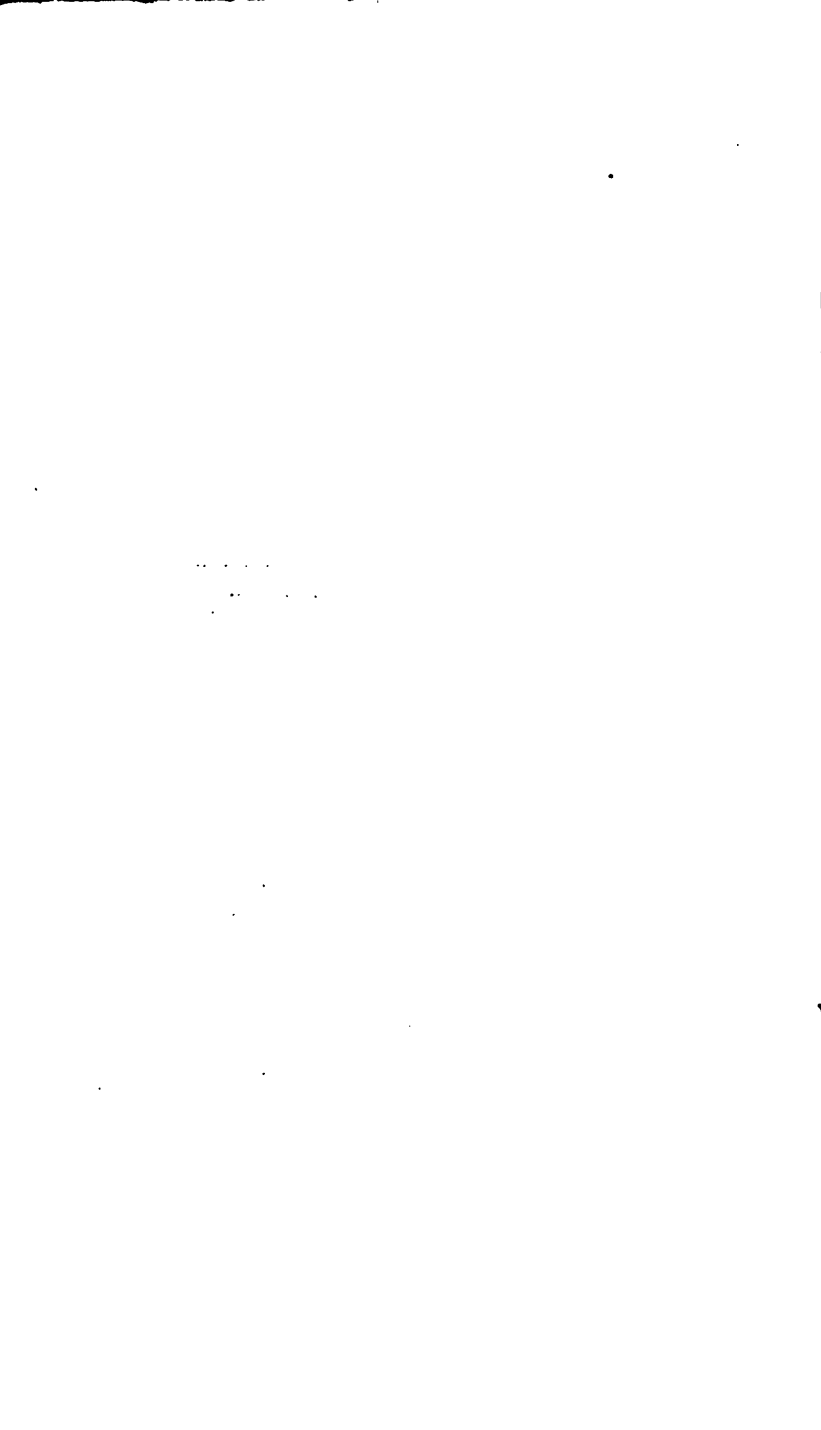


OLIVER & BOYD, EDINBURGH;
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO., LONDON;
G. S. TULLIS, CUPAR.
MDCCCXLIV.



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P R E F A C E.

THE history of Joseph is on many accounts highly instructive. It is an admirable commentary on the doctrine of a special Providence. It is a fine illustration of excellence flourishing in circumstances the most unfavourable to its display. It is, also, in various respects, typical of events in the history both of Christ himself and of the Christian Church. The most eminent divines, at least, have considered it in this light. Whether, therefore, for the edification of our faith or for the regulation of our practice, it may well be esteemed eminently profitable. So well persuaded of its importance and utility was the learned and pious Bishop Hall, that he remarked, " If an angel from heaven were to say he could sufficiently comment upon it, I would distrust him ; for here it is easy to say more, and impossible to say

enough." The following papers are given to the world in the hope that, with the Divine blessing, some of those many lessons suggested by that interesting narrative may be brought home to the heart and conscience of the reader.

May 1844.

HISTORY

OF

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

CHAPTER FIRST.

THE FAVOURITE CHILD.

It may at first, perhaps, be thought that we possess but scanty materials for making a due estimate of Joseph's character when he was yet a young man in his father's house. But, although little has been expressly stated respecting it, that little is full of import, and may well justify the persuasion that his youth was distinguished by sound religious principle. We are to remember that Jacob himself was the grandson of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful ; that, piously disposed as he was, there is the strongest reason for believing that he would take occasion to instruct his household in regard to the truths of religion ; and that, as Joseph especially was much with him, he would embrace every opportunity of instilling into his opening mind the doctrines of heavenly wisdom. His own life and history had been such as to satisfy

him that the hand of God was upon him for good ; nor can it be doubted that he would communicate to the child whom he so fondly loved that information, in regard both to himself and his ancestors, which was likely, through the Divine blessing, to produce in his tender mind a lively admiration of the ways of Providence.

“Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren ; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives ; and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age : and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”—Genesis xxxvii. 1–4.

1. *He brought unto his father their evil report.*—These words are not, we think, to be understood as in anywise reflecting unfavourably upon the character of Joseph ; they do not necessarily mean that he acted as a tale-bearer, or that he malignantly did anything to estrange the affections of Jacob from his other children. That would have argued an evil disposition, and a temper of mind altogether inconsistent with that which so honourably distinguished him in after life. Nothing is more repugnant to the genius of religion than a spirit of censoriousness. It is a transgression of the royal law of love, and is the sure indication of a selfish nature. The Psalmist David, we know, gives it as one of the marks by which a good man is distinguished, that he does not slander with his tongue, nor take up a reproach against his neigh-

bour. But as there is a time to keep silence, there is a time to speak. Although charity suffereth long and is kind, she cannot be always mute; even the regard that she feels for others constrains her to employ all lawful means for their reformation and amendment. Thus, we doubt not, it was with the beloved son of Jacob. Living, as he himself did, in the fear of God, it must have grieved his soul to observe his brethren, who were dear to him, indulging themselves in sinful pleasures. Having been accustomed to ponder the value of his own soul, it would vex him to find that they so lightly esteemed the salvation of theirs; and fearing the consequences to their eternal welfare, he would adopt the measures most likely in his estimation to awaken them to seriousness.

It was, indeed, most sad to think that the instructions of their venerable parent were so soon forgotten by them; that, when they went out of his presence, they were regardless of his counsels; and that, notwithstanding the many prayers which he had preferred to heaven in their behalf, they yet conducted themselves as those alone might have been expected to do who had never received the benefit of a religious education at all.

What the particular sins may have been of which these young men were guilty, the sacred narrative has not informed us. It is enough they were such as indicated an irreligious state of mind; and it is not, therefore, wonderful that the heart of the pious youth was wounded because of them. Probably, before reporting them to their father, he wept many times in secret, and prayed that the disobedient might be turned to the wisdom of the just. Probably, too, they

mocked at his remonstrances, and treated his well-meant expostulations, as impertinent and officious. And so, finding at last that they obstinately persisted in a course of sin, "Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." This he was bound to do in justice both to his brethren and to Jacob. It was the only conceivable way in which he could hope to cure them of the impieties and immoralities which they practised; and he was thus doing them a far greater kindness than if he had either countenanced or been silent at their sin. Thoughtless as they were, there was thus, he might think, some likelihood of their being awed by parental authority—when reproved by the good old man for their disregard of his former counsels, the more generous feelings of their nature might revive, and so, with God's blessing, a salutary change be wrought upon their hearts.

Justice to his father, too, demanded this. Had he concealed from *him* their misdeeds, he would have been to him as a deceiver. Knowing his truthful disposition, Jacob would put full confidence in him. And was that confidence to be abused? Would it not have been base to allow an unsuspecting parent to become the dupe of his children's villany? And especially (which is far from being unlikely), if the information were solicited, would it not have been at once impious and unfilial to withhold it? Yea more, it was an act of justice to himself. Had he not done so, he could not have cleared his own conscience—he would have been a partaker of his brethren's sins—and their blood would have been upon his head. As it was, he discharged a painful but sacred duty to his brethren, his father, and himself.

We are hence taught that the obligations of religion are stronger than those of natural affection. Should those even who are most nearly related to us by the ties of blood, live in the indulgence of any known sin, we are not on this account to deem it the less abominable. Should they persuade us to be like-minded with themselves, we may not with impunity hearken to their counsel, nor give heed to their solicitations. There are many, it is to be feared, whose friendly partialities induce them to moderate their disapprobation of such sins as they know to be habitually committed by their own relatives, and who, if they go not the full length of joining them in those sins, yet forbear to manifest that quick and sensitive abhorrence of the evil which becomes persons professing godliness. The claims of religion it should, however, be remembered, are higher than all others. "If a man," says Jesus Christ, "love either father or mother, brother or sister, more than me, he is unworthy to be called my disciple."

2. *Israel loved Joseph more than all his children.*—Much mischief has been occasioned in domestic circles by parental partiality. Sometimes it has happened that fathers and mothers have, from no discoverable motive, singled out as special favourites certain members of the family, while they have treated with coldness, if not with cruelty, others as much entitled to their regard. The consequences of such unmeaning favouritism have almost uniformly been unhappy. The child so unjustly selected from the rest, is made to acquire undue notions of his own importance, or rendered insolent and wayward, while the best affections of the others are checked and their worst pas-

sions brought into play. The house becomes, ere long, divided against itself, and not unfrequently the parents themselves reap of the seeds which they have sown in the ingratitude, disobedience, and mutual hatred of their offspring. We do not think it was thus with the venerable patriarch. He loved Joseph, indeed, more than all his children; but he had good cause for doing so. His was not an unreasonable partiality or an unaccountable caprice; we are told that he did so, because he was *the son of his old age*. We should indeed greatly mistake the grounds of the preference, did we understand these words literally. It seems not a little strange that they have ever been so interpreted; were we even to take them in this sense, we should have some difficulty in reconciling with them the well-known fact, that Jacob had a younger son than Joseph. Benjamin was by several years his junior, and *he* therefore would have more properly been called in this respect, "the son of his old age." But the truth is, the words in the original do not necessarily mean, that Joseph was peculiarly beloved by his father on account of the term of life which the latter had attained at his birth, but rather that he was a remarkably wise and thoughtful child—that even in boyhood he gave proofs of discretion and understanding far beyond his years—and that there resided within him a spirit more characteristic of sober age, than of gay and light-minded youth. He was (so the words may be rendered) *a son of age*, that is of wisdom.

Ponder this, then, ye children, and be taught from it the fear of the Lord. Pray God that he would give unto you the instruction of wisdom, and make you of

an understanding heart. With this view be much in the company of those to whom the hoary head is a crown of glory ; sit at the feet of them who can recount to you the works of the Lord, and declare his mighty works ; submit yourselves to healthful discipline and apply for counsel to your superiors in knowledge, in virtue, and in years. Be not ashamed to be seen more frequently at the knee of the grey-haired man, than in the company of the thoughtless. Incline more to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting. Employ all the means which God has placed within your reach of becoming wise unto salvation. Devote a stated portion of your time to reading, to meditation, and to prayer ; and doubt not that, by the diligent observance of such means, you shall become wiser than your enemies. Wisdom shall be life unto your souls, and a crown of glory to your heads.

3. *When the brethren of Joseph saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*—The natures of these young men were as yet unsanctified by the grace of God. They ought to have rejoiced in the proofs which Joseph thus soon manifested of future eminence. They should have been thankful for the interest which he evinced in their reformation, and should have been provoked to an imitation of his excellencies ; but hatred and envy wrought mightily within them ; they could not bear to see him more esteemed than they themselves were—they were jealous of the place which he occupied in their father's regard, and took it ill that he so much surpassed them in talent and in virtue. Even if it had been an undue

partiality which Jacob bore to him, they were old enough to make proper allowance for it. They ought to have considered that there were peculiar circumstances connected with the history of this now motherless lad sufficient to awake their most generous sympathy. As it was, they should have laboured rather to cultivate the dispositions which had so endeared Joseph to his aged father, and have tried to secure his affection by a course of upright and pious conduct. But no; Joseph is more loved than they, and envy drinks up their blood. He informs his father of their evil deeds, and they hate him with a bitter hatred.

Need I ask any of my readers—What think ye of these young men? Their own moral feelings must be vitiated indeed if they have not already answered this question. But let it not be thought that the case before us is a rare one. Change but a few of the circumstances, and you may see it acted over again even at this day. How often does it happen that the prosperity of *one* individual is a source of unhappiness to *many*! Because they are not equally successful, they depreciate his worth, bear a grudge to his person, and complain even of those arrangements of Providence which have contributed to his promotion. They stop not to consider that his talent or piety may be greater than theirs. They allow not themselves to inquire whether there may not be something about their own tempers or characters which keeps them back from honour. Nor have they patience to weigh in an even balance all the circumstances of the case. And so their hearts become the seats of every malignant passion; and if they go not the full length of Joseph's brethren in carrying out their envious feelings into

action, it is because necessity restrains them. They want only the *opportunity*, not the *will*, to work as extensive mischief.

It were, indeed, long to tell the evils which envy has occasioned in the world. It was envy that took Satan into Paradise, and prompted the cunning solicitation by which he prevailed on our common parents to break covenant with God. He *looked upon* their felicity, and it was torturing to his malignant nature. By the working of this passion, human blood was for the first time shed in our apostate world. Cain saw that the sacrifice of Abel was more acceptable than his own offering; and, taking ill the preference, he lifted the murderous arm against his righteous brother. Through envy it was that the Egyptians so cruelly oppressed the strangers in their land, increased their burdens, and cast their little ones into the devouring water. Through envy it was that Korah and his companions wrought such deadly mischief in the camp of Israel. It was envy that heated the furnace for the three children in Babylon—envy, that cast Daniel, the devout saint and upright statesman, into the lion's den—envy, that led to the unjust condemnation and ignominious death of the Holy Child Jesus—envy, that moved the Jews to rage against the Apostles who attested his resurrection—envy, in one word, that still impels the adversary of God and man to ply his insidious and multiform temptations in the earth.

Most important, then, it is that we should watch against the first stirrings of this evil passion, and that we should ponder well the golden maxim of Israel's king—"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of

it are the issues of life." And, for this purpose, let us cultivate the charity which St Paul has so beautifully described in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, the "charity which *envieth not*, vaunteth not itself, is not easily puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, and rejoiceth not in iniquity." Envy not any man for aught that he possesses ; for whatever good he has is the gift of God : envy not the prosperity of the wicked ; for soon, very soon, shall they be brought low—their honours shall fade as a moth : envy not the acquirements of the good ; rather adopt the generous principle of an ancient saint—"Would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets."

Yet once more. The conduct of Joseph's brethren is acted over again by those who hate the monitors that would dissuade them from evil. Some men there are who cannot bear to have their besetting faults alluded to ; it pains them to the quick when the most delicate reference is made to their characteristic sins. To the preacher who deals faithfully with their consciences they say, as Ahab did to the prophet Elijah, "Hast thou found me, oh ! mine enemy." They desire to hear smooth things, and to be flattered with visions of peace. The remonstrances of their own consciences, too, they dismiss as impertinent intrusions ; and because God's word contains heavy threatenings against iniquity, they deny its inspiration, or qualify and explain away its statements. They consider not that the quiet which they love, is the quiet of death, and that the tender mercies which they affect are very cruel. May such be admonished in time to think whether it be not better to endure the agony of a

wounded spirit now than to suffer it eternally ! May they consider, in the time of their visitation, that God's Spirit will not always strive with man !

4. *Behold in the early affliction of Joseph a type of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.*—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He was the Beloved Son of his Father, and even in childhood many distinctions were conferred on him. The grace of God was upon him, and, when but twelve years old, his questions and answers astonished all that heard him in the temple. But the malice of his brethren was soon manifested against him. The archers sorely grieved him—they shot at him, and hated him. His warnings were despised, and his counsels set at naught. "His brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." Let not, then, any afflicted or persecuted child of God deem it strange that he is ridiculed by some and reviled by others ; rather let him expect such treatment ; and let him derive encouragement to persevere under it from the saying of his Divine Master—"Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake."

CHAPTER SECOND.

A DREAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"—— As the sun
Ere it is risen, sometimes paints its image
In the atmosphere; so sometimes do the spirits
Of great events stride on before the events,
And in to-day already walks to-morrow."

IN the last chapter we have had a view of the early character of Joseph, of the peculiar affection entertained towards him by his father, and of the consequent hatred and envy of his brethren.

It had, however, been determined by Almighty God himself, that this persecuted youth should, in after years, be promoted to great honour, and be the instrument of saving many souls alive. And so, even when he suffered wrongfully under the dislike of his own brethren, he received from heaven premonitions of future elevation. These, we cannot doubt, kept him from sinking under the burden of their reproach and mockery. What although the shafts of their ridicule were armed against him, when he felt himself shielded by Omnipotence! And what, though in the brightness of noon-day he had to bear their scorn, when in the deep silence of midnight sweet visions were given to him from God, and the secret of the

Most High was with him ! These things might well suffice to make him bear patiently the hardships of his condition, and encourage him in the ways of piety.

That the great Spirit who made and governs the universe has free access to the minds of men, both in their wakeful and sleeping hours, will be denied by no one who admits the first principles of religion. The world of matter and the world of mind are alike under his control, and the established laws of either he can alter or suspend at pleasure. Accordingly, we find that, as at *sundry times*, so in *divers manners*, he has spoken unto the children of men. Sometimes he has aroused their attention by an audible voice from Heaven, as was the case on Mount Sinai, when he delivered laws to the trembling Israelites. Sometimes he has spoken to them, as to Job, out of the whirlwind ; and sometimes, as to Saul journeying towards Damascus, he has flashed conviction on their understandings by a light brighter than the sun. Sometimes, as to Ezekiel, Isaiah, and John, he has manifested himself in vision ; and sometimes, as to Joseph, Solomon, and Daniel, he has imparted wisdom in dreams. Causing a deep slumber to fall upon the frame, he has opened the mind to discipline, and given songs in the night. The bodily senses being locked up in the chains of a divinely-commissioned sleep, he has brought near to their spirits the mysteries of futurity, and privileged them to look through the veil of flesh to objects that lie beyond the reach of fancy or conjecture. The book of his secret decrees, which no man or angel can presume to break open, he has brought within the sphere of their quickened intellect, and has permitted them to read a portion of its con-

tents. It has, indeed, been well said, even by a heathen, "The reflections of the night are deepest." Nor is it less worthy of remark, as an ancient father has observed, that, while David, in the nineteenth Psalm, attributes *speech* to the day, he ascribes *wisdom* to the silent night. Often in the profound calm of nature has a still small voice been heard, and through the obscure gloom of sense light has visited the soul.

The dreams of Joseph were, like those of Abraham and Solomon, *from God*. To show that he can impart knowledge to the soul, which he has formed, in ways apparently the most improbable, he reveals his counsels in the dark, and makes known his mind by signs and strange wonders. Joseph is hated by his brethren; but, in an hour when he had least expected it, a prophetic dream of glory is imparted to him. The sheaf of corn which stands erect while the others fall becomes emblematic of the pre-eminence which awaits him; and the luminaries of nature which seem to render him obeisance are significant of the prostration which his kindred must yet make in his presence.

The announcement of these things, however, does but aggravate their hatred and feed their envy. "They hated him," it is said, "yet the more for his dreams and for his words." Ill as they had already taken it that he was more esteemed by their father than they, they were now more indignant at the thought of his being promoted to yet greater honour. With scorn they asked, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Shortly after these things, they go to feed their father's flocks in Shechem; and Israel, anxious for their welfare, sends Joseph to inquire after them. As we read:—

"Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks," &c.—Genesis xxxvii. 13–20.

Joseph must doubtless have known enough of his brethren's nature to be aware that this was a hazardous errand. He had already been no stranger to their insult and malice; their previous enmity, too, he could not but know was now considerably increased by late occurrences; and, therefore, to face them in that solitary region was, he might be sure, only to expose himself afresh to their vindictive rage. Nevertheless, a principle of obedience to his father's will subdued every other consideration. It was enough for him that, painful and perilous as was the office, his beloved parent had assigned it to him—enough for him that, though his brethren might scoff at his pretensions, calumniate his worth, and abuse his person, he had a message from home to address to them. Let the consequences be what they might, his duty was clear, and filial love constrained him to accomplish it. He said unto his father—"Here am I."

From this portion of the narrative let young persons be taught the important duty of obedience to parents. From this no considerations drawn from personal comfort or safety can absolve you. So long

as those whom God has appointed to be your guardians enjoin nothing that is interdicted in his blessed word, you are bound to give a cheerful and submissive acquiescence. No matter how ungracious to your own liking may be the errand on which you are called to go—no matter how many difficulties or obstructions you may see in the way—no matter that a strong disinclination may exist in your bosoms to the service, and that you have reason to anticipate extreme danger in the discharge of it—it is enough that their authority over you is given them of God, and that He has said, “Honour thy father and thy mother.” This being the case, it is yours not to refuse, or even hesitate. Should they, indeed, so far abuse their power as to lay upon you a *sinful* command, it would be right that you should bear the utmost weight of their displeasure rather than perform it; for the authority of God is greater than that of man, and all other claims are subordinate to His. But should the requirements which they impose, however stern or unpleasing to you they may seem, be such as God’s word does not oppose, you are bound, alike in duty to them and to God himself, to give heed unto the charge.

But what is particularly to be remarked in this portion of the narrative is, that the obedience of Joseph was singularly typical of that which Christ rendered to his Heavenly Father. From what work assigned to him, however dangerous, did *He* shrink? On what errand of mercy did *He* refuse to go? At his Father’s bidding, he came into a world in which all evil passions were arrayed against him, the authority of Heaven was trampled under foot, and the counsel of the Eternal set at nought. Forgetful of God and

ungrateful for his goodness, men followed the devices of their own hearts, and sought only their own pleasures. Yet, full of pity and tender compassion, God sends unto them his beloved Son, born of a woman and made under the law. Obedient to his Father's voice, he undertakes a journey, not like that of Joseph from the enchanting vale of Hebron to the pastoral solitudes of Shechem, but a journey from the highest heavens to this our far-off world ; leaves the glory with which from eternity he had been encircled to tabernacle in human flesh ; and consents to undergo all conceivable (or rather we should say *inconceivable*) hardships, so his Father's pleasure may be fulfilled. Not that he was indistinctly prescient of the destiny that was before him—not that he underrated the inconveniences or tormenting cruelties that he must needs bear ;—no, all these he was fully prepared to undergo, for to his all-seeing eye every contingency was open ; but it was enough that thus it had been written in the volume of the Book concerning him. And, therefore, when no adequate messenger could be found, he submissively said—"Here am I ; send me." Before taking one step in the wondrous journey of humiliation, he knew with divine certainty every incident that should befall him on the way. Yet did none of these things move him from his purpose ; at the time fixed in the Divine counsels, he appeared as the messenger of the Highest. Knowing well "what was in man," he declared faithfully and fearlessly the whole truth of God. Although he well knew beforehand that his doctrine would be offensive to many, he kept nothing back which he had been commissioned to announce. Already had the Jews sought to stone

him out of Judea ; but because he has an opportunity of glorifying God, he must needs go thither again. He knows that it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem ; yet, because his hour is come, he goes up before his disciples to the feast. The ignominy of crucifixion is before him ; but, because his Father has willed it, he despises the shame. The burden of divine wrath is heavy to endure ; but, because such is the appointment of Heaven, he refuses not to bear it. Yea, even when nature would have cried out—" Father, save me from this hour !" the divine energy that resides in him makes him say with resignation—" But for this cause came I unto this hour." Bitter beyond all human understanding as were the ingredients in the cup mingled for him, because God had so foreordained it, he says, with the meekest resignation—" Not my will, but thine be done." Verily, as an apostle says, " though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered."

Is it for *us*, then, to murmur or complain under the the afflictive dispensations of Providence ? Is it for us, on whom " commandments *not* grievous" have been laid, to oppose to the will of the lawgiver objections and surmises, having in them neither strength nor consistency ? Rather let us (whether by doing or by suffering) seek to glorify Him whose children we profess to be, and whom, therefore, we are bound to serve.

What seekest thou ? Had such a question been proposed to our Lord Jesus, when he went up and down in our apostate world, He, too, might have answered in similar terms, *I go to seek my brethren.* Such was the errand upon which he came, and such the end which he steadily pursued. Whether he walked

along the sea coasts of Galilee, or resorted to Bethany, or passed through Jericho, or set his face towards Jerusalem, his object was the same. He sought his brethren—the lost sheep of the house of Israel. No bodily fatigue, no external discouragement, could prevail upon him to desist from his labours of love. From one place to another, he went about doing good. He had souls to gather in—rebels to reduce to their allegiance—enemies to reconcile unto God. Who is He that thus goes about with a visage more marred than any man's, and without having where to lay his head? It is Jesus, the Son of God. And wherefore, too, is his face so often wet with weeping, and his eye filled with tears? It is because he “seeks his brethren,” and finds them not; he calls, but they do not answer; he stretches out his hand, and they regard not. His feet, too! they are pierced with thorns—his path has been amongst briars. And all this is because his “brethren, after the flesh,” have gone from mountain to hill, forsaking their resting-place.

Yes, it is He. You may know him by the raiment which he wears—the *coat of many colours* with which his father has invested him. Never was there any robe like that by which *He* is distinguished. It was wrought not by human or angelic hands, but in the loom of eternal predestination. Divinity and humanity are there mysteriously united. Very God, yet very man is he. The graces of humility, meekness, piety, love, and resignation are here incomparably blended. This garment his father has given him, that he may be distinguished from all his brethren.

Mark next, however, the reception that Joseph meets with—“When they saw him afar off, even before he

came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

They waited not to see what sort of message Joseph brought—they tarried not to hear whether he had some interesting communication to make unto them from their common father; but when they saw him "afar off," even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him. We shall not insult the moral judgment of our readers by asking, what think you of their spirit? But we would again crave their attention to the still more desperately wicked conduct here historically typified. Who does not know that even thus was the blessed Jesus despitefully used by his brethren after the flesh? Without knowing what the doctrines were which he was to proclaim, Herod sought to murder him in infancy. Notwithstanding that no claims were as yet put forth for him, it was enough to provoke the jealous envy of the tyrant that men had come from the East to worship him as the King of the Jews. But especially did the historical type receive its explanation when the chief priests, the captains, and the elders, came forth against Jesus with swords and with staves. This was indeed of all conspiracies the basest and the most atrocious. Then did the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands assunder, let us cast away their cords from us. They desired no more to hear the solemn warn-

ings which he had so often sounded in their ears, to behold the miracles which bore unqualified testimony to the divinity of his mission, nor to be told of the extension of his fame. Could they but succeed in accomplishing his death, they would, so they flattered themselves, no longer be annoyed either with a painful consciousness of his superiority, or with an acute sense of the rebukes which he administered. Therefore did they thirst after his blood and anticipate his overthrow. Yea, even as Joseph's brethren scornfully cried, Behold this dreamer cometh, so did the persecutors of Jesus insultingly allude to the miracles which in former times he had wrought, saying, He saved others, himself he cannot save. Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.

Thus were both the type and the antitype insulted. So reasoned the brethren of Joseph, and so reasoned the persecutors of Jesus. Come now, said the former, and let us kill him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams. They imagined (shortsighted mortals!) that thus the promotion of Joseph would be defeated, and all his expectations turned into vanity. So, likewise, the Jews imagined that by putting Jesus to death they would blast for ever his pretensions to the Messiahship. They fondly thought that the hopes of his followers would perish in the grave where he was laid, and that he, having died in ignominy, would be remembered only as a deceiver. But the counsels of heaven were not thus, in either case, to be set aside. The dreams which Joseph dreamed, being divinely given, may not fail to be accomplished, and the claims which Christ asserts, being righteous and

divinely attested, must be completely vindicated. The very wrath of man contributes in both cases to the end which Providence had in view; and the result is to shew that neither man in earth, angel in heaven, nor fiend in hell, can contend against God and prosper.

The heart of every one not dead to the calls of humanity must feel shocked at the subsequent behaviour of these remorseless youths. Reuben, indeed, more merciful than the rest, intercedes in his behalf—the sympathies of nature are not quite annihilated in his bosom. But the majority are bent on their brother's destruction. And so, too, even Pilate would have let Jesus go, but the Jews cried, Away with him, away with him, let him be crucified.

1. *We are hence taught, in the first place, that the sufferings of righteous persons form no reasonable objection against the moral government of God.*—It has long been asked, Wherefore do the wicked prosper, and why are the innocent oppressed? But, with the sacred records in our hands, we are not left, in solving this question, to wander in the mazes of conjecture. We know that grand and righteous ends are thus advanced; and that, although clouds and darkness may surround the Almighty, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Thus the graces of his own people are brought into manifestation; thus their strength of principle is evidenced; thus the wisdom of his own procedure is vindicated; thus, in one word, does he *maintain faith in the earth*. From the fiery trial to which his own servants are subjected, he brings them forth as gold purified seven times. When he allows the ungodly to prosper in their

wickedness, it is not because he is indifferent to moral distinctions, but because he has wise and good purposes to serve ; because he would have men to look higher than the high places of this world ; and because he would put to proof the "spirit that is in man." Let not, then, the promiscuous irregularities of the present life weaken, but rather strengthen, our faith in the Divine superintendence. Joseph, even when suffering wrongfully in the hands of his brethren, is happier than they. Although more powerful, they are, in point of real dignity, far inferior to him. The sense of integrity is better to him than all riches ; and, even if he should have died in their hands, he would but have exchanged a world of care for one of endless joy. Their malice could not reach his better part ; and, after cruel indeed, but still only temporary suffering, he would have passed into a region where there are pleasures for evermore. As it was, they could not harm one hair of his head ; for the Lord had yet work for him to do upon the earth, and their worst designs were providentially counteracted. Be it ours, then, under the most adverse and apparently inexplicable dispensations of Providence, to trust the matter entirely in our Maker's hands ; and, when we are at any time tempted to wonder at the course which he adopts, let us satisfy our doubts by the consideration, that **THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH WILL DO RIGHT.** God is his own interpreter, and he will make plain his way. His way is on the waters, indeed, and his footsteps are not known. But what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

2. *We may hence observe, that God often works out his designs by means that seem least likely to*

bring them about.—He had determined that Joseph should, at a future period, be ruler over all the land of Egypt, and that his father's children should bow down before him. And this their evil treatment of his person was one link in the great chain of Providence. But for this, he would not have been taken down to that land in whose history he was afterwards so conspicuously to shine. The evil, indeed, was theirs, but the good issue was of the Lord, whose prerogative it is to educe order from confusion, and to take the wise in their own craftiness. So, too, from the blackest of all crimes ever perpetrated beneath the sun, he has caused the highest blessings to flow. The crucifixion of his son Jesus was a deed so horrid, that even inanimate nature was, as it were, palsy-struck when it took place. As if to present a contrast to the hearts of men, the rocks rent ; and, as if in shame at the foul enormity, the sun hid his face at noon. Yet from this very act, atrocious beyond all description in itself, to God the greatest glory, and to man the highest good, have redounded. That fiendish malice which instigated the Jewish nation to the murder of the Holy Child Jesus, was made the instrument of bringing about a glorious redemption for thousands and tens of thousands. Not that he either approved of their wickedness, or laid any restraint upon their choice. God forbid that any man should suppose so ; but that, while he left them to their own bad wills, he so overruled the whole as at once to glorify his own justice, establish the ultimate honour of his Son, and provide for the eternal salvation of a multitude which no man can number.

CHAPTER THIRD.

DANGER AND DELIVERANCE.

IN the preceding chapter we have traced a few of the analogies that obtain between the character and trials of Joseph and those of Jesus Christ, the Beloved of his Father, and the rejected of his brethren ; and we now go on to take a view of the strange manner in which the wicked designs of those young men were counteracted. The majority intended to kill him ; but God, who had great work for him to do, overrules their malice, and opens up for his youthful servant a door of escape.

“ It came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, the coat of many colours that was on him ; and they took him and cast him into a pit ; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread ; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood ?” &c.—Genesis xxxvii. 23–26.

1. *They stripped him of his coat, the coat of many colours, that was on him.*—Ever since that garment had been given him to wear, the sight of it had pro-

voked the worst passions of their nature. It mattered not that a father's love had been exercised in the making of it, and that a father's hand had put it on. To render it hateful in their estimation, it sufficed that the wearer of it was more deserving of honour than they; and so, envying *him*, they detested *it*. It was associated in their minds with a feeling of their own inferiority, and they could not look on it but with aversion.

Had they been possessed of proper affection towards their venerable father, they would have spared the garment for the old man's sake. Or had their minds been at all influenced by common discretion, they would have considered that he was at liberty to do as it pleased him with his own. But by neither of these principles were they moved. As if it were nothing either to do despite to paternal feeling, or to question the privileges which belonged to Jacob as a man, they strip Joseph of his coat—the coat of many colours—which with much care the good old man had wrought, and on which, with pleasurable emotions, he had often gazed. The action was as unfilial towards Jacob as unbrotherly towards Joseph.

Yet, bad and unjustifiable as the deed was, it has often been repeated by those who would not scruple to condemn it as thus exemplified. Almighty God, the Father of Spirits, has oftentimes distinguished his children by visible tokens of regard. One man he has endowed with rare powers of intellect, another with choice eloquence, a third with vivid imagination. Yet has it as frequently happened, that by the envious world these gifts have been contemned, and the persons who enjoyed them have been assailed by the

foulest epithets which calumny could invent. Their title to eminence has been questioned by some, and their worth depreciated by others. Those who fell far short of their attainments have sought to despoil them of their just fame, and have done what they could to render them vile in public estimation. Thus, because John the Baptist leads a retired life in the desert, they say he has a devil ; because Paul preaches Jesus and the resurrection, the Athenians deride him as a babbler, and Festus charges him with madness ; because Stephen speaks with a wisdom and a spirit which they are unable to resist, his adversaries suborn men to say that they have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. In short, the very qualities, whether of mind or heart, by which good men are specially distinguished, provoke the envy and depreciating resentment of the bad.

But especially was it so in regard to Jesus, the beloved Son of God in human nature. To him the Spirit was not given by measure. He was anointed with the oil of gladness above all his fellows. His was a garment in every respect unspotted by the flesh—undefiled by one stain of original or actual sin he was fairer than the sons of men. From the fall downward, prophetic intimations were given of his advent ; but, when in the fulness of time he did come, these announcements were maliciously perverted. The Baptist had, in unambiguous terms, pointed him out as the Lamb of God, that should take away the sin of the world, but few believed his report. An audible voice from Heaven gave greater testimony to him than John ; and the Spirit, descending upon him like a dove, on the banks of Jordan, gave ocular demon-

stration of his celestial mission. Yet was he despised and rejected of men. The stupendous miracles which he wrought amongst the people proved, beyond all controversy, that he came from God ; yet were even these slanderously and diabolically misinterpreted. They said concerning him, " He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." His doctrine was such as no one could have delivered but he who had been in the bosom of the Father ; yet did those to whom it was addressed cry out, " He is mad ; wherefore hear ye him ?" Thus " did they strip him of his coat—the coat of many colours which was on him." And in all this they acted at once impiously towards God, and cruelly towards the Son of Man. Impiously towards God, for those were HIS gifts, and it was HIS pleasure that in Jesus all fulness should dwell. Ungraciously towards the Son of Man, for he had every claim upon their compassion and love which benignity could impose. Had they revered God, they would have received, with every mark of homage, the Messenger who came in his great name. Had they not been filled with all malice and unrighteousness, they would have deemed their obligation to him inexpressibly urgent ; but, destitute alike of piety and of charity, they poured contempt on every mark of approbation which his Father set upon him.

May we not here ask ourselves whether we are not partakers of this sin. To Christ himself we cannot now offer any personal indignity ; for He is exalted to the highest honour in his Father's house, and a name has been given him which is above every name. But let us remember, that an inspired Apostle has taught us, that to sin wilfully, after we have received the

knowledge of the truth, is to tread under foot the Son of God, and to count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Be it ours, then, to pray earnestly that we may be kept from every appearance of this evil, and enabled both in word and deed to honour Him whom God hath honoured. May we never forget that he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that hath sent him. There are those, it is well known, in the so-styled Christian world, who, while they acknowledge him to be a perfect man, raised up of Almighty God to instruct and enlighten our race, deny his original divinity and the consequent doctrine of his atoning merits ; and this they do, with a view, they say, to simplify the Christian theology, and render it of more easy credence to the sceptical. We question not the sincerity of their own belief, nor dare we attack the integrity of the motives by which they profess themselves to be guided ; but, even with this admission, we must hold that, to expunge these articles from the Christian system, is nothing less than to rob the High Priest of our profession of that glory which essentially belongs to him. The plain sense of Scripture is to be taken in all points of doctrine, rather than the most ingenious construction which sophistry can put upon it. And as the Bible was designed for the rude and the simple, as well as for men of erudition and accomplishment, it would be to charge God with foolishness, or rather with something worse than foolishness, to assert that its obvious statements are not to be understood but in a qualified or limited import. Unless we are to suppose that the God of all Truth designed to mislead us, we must of necessity admit that the numerous assertions of Christ's divinity are to

be taken as they stand—that God, who has solemnly declared that he will not give his glory to another, has also, in the most distinct terms, commanded us to worship Him whom he has set at his own right hand on the throne of the universe. Let us not, then, be ashamed to call Jesus, Lord. If we are, he will be ashamed of us at his coming in great glory.

2. *They took him, and cast him into a pit; and they sat down to eat bread.*—The sacred narrative has told us nothing of the behaviour of Joseph under these cruel circumstances. A single expression, however, which afterwards occurs, lets us in some measure into the secret. We read that *he besought them in the anguish of his soul*. So they said one to another, when, without as yet knowing it, they stood before him in the land of Egypt. (Genesis xlii. 21.) And surely there is no one of my readers so ignorant of human nature as to wonder what the arguments might be by which he would expostulate with them. He would plead, no doubt, the nearness and dearness of their relationship to him—represent to them the atrocity of the crime which they meditated—appeal to heaven in vindication of his own brotherly affection—and bid them pause to think how the tidings of his death would vex the heart of the good old man whose life was bound up in his own. It might have melted the soul of a stranger to hear such moving remonstrances. But the beseeching tones of Joseph's voice are, in the hearing of *his own brethren*, lifted up in vain; their tender mercies are cruel; neither his cries nor his tears affect them in the slightest; the springs of humanity appear to have been dried up in their bosoms; and thirsty, as by reason of his long

journey he must needs be, they cast him into a pit where no water is ; yea, more than this, as if they had done some praiseworthy or meritorious deed, they sit down by themselves to eat bread, while he, their brother, is ready to perish with hunger !

Barbarous and hard-hearted men ! Could they solicit a blessing on that meal which they were about to partake of, or ask the God of Mercy to render it nutritious ? Perhaps they did ; for the formalist and the hypocrite can go thus far. Yea, there are those who, although the sighing of the needy is heard throughout their borders, and the widow and the fatherless mourn for lack of bread, can sit down at their richly furnished tables, without a feeling of compassion in their breasts, and, without a blush upon their faces, can go through the *ceremony* (for with them it can be nothing more than a ceremony), of asking the Deity, to whom mercy is dearer than sacrifice, to bless their luxurious fare. Yea, worse than this, there are some even whose wealth has been acquired not by the labours of their own honest industry, nor by the legitimate "inheritance of fathers," but by the sweat of other men's brows, and who, by oppression, fraud, and chicanery, have attained to opulence, that yet cannot allow themselves to dispense with a form, than which, were the claims of justice and mercy observed, nothing could be more decent. With what face or consistency they can address the God who has revealed himself as the special guardian of the poor, we pretend not to explain. They must forget that the prayer of the wicked is to him an abomination, and that the offering of unrighteousness is odious in his sight. Let them first undo the heavy

burdens and let the oppressed go free—let them break every galling yoke, and restore what they have taken wrongfully away, before they ask a God of mercy and justice to make their food nourishing, or their social intercourse comfortable. It is, indeed, of all mockeries the most profane, *that* of men thanking Heaven for what they have themselves acquired unrighteously, and rendering the easy homage of the lip for the corn, the wine, and the oil, which the needy have prepared without adequate remuneration. It is painful to a generous-hearted man to think that, while in his own house, the necessities, or even the luxuries of life abound, there are others in the land who know not whither to look for even a morsel of bread. And this consideration, while it renders him thankful for what he has, disposes him to help to the uttermost of his ability those who are not so blessed. But it is base almost beyond endurance, when, from the exertions of the honest and upright man, unjust profit is extorted, and the sons of affluence not only shed no tears over the *sorrows* of the poor, but eat even with a merry heart the superfluous delicacies which, but for the ill-requited *labours* of the poor, would never have been served up to them at all. To be altogether forgetful of the destitute is bad enough; but to know that they are hard by, and yet not aid them, argues a disposition of heart almost as selfish and inhuman as that manifested by the brethren of Joseph under the circumstances above described. May all such consider ere it be too late, that their prayers are impious and their thanksgivings abominable. Let them learn to break off their sins by righteousness, and their transgressions by showing mercy to the poor. Then may

they eat their bread with gladness and drink their wine with a cheerful heart. Then, and not till then, will their prayers and their alms together go up in sweet memorial before God. "But woe," says the prophet Amos, "to them that lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall, that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

3. *A company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, going down to Egypt.*—It is beautifully said by the psalmist David, that a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord. In the extremity of Joseph's anguish, a company of merchants appear in sight. They are on their way to Egypt, prosecuting their worldly business, and that God, who knows the end of a thing from the beginning of it, renders them the instruments of his servant's preservation. When he has a design to serve, he will not want means to bring it round; and the course of his providence has been so arranged that, at the precise period when it is most expedient to render aid, that aid is vouchsafed. Thus, when Moses was to all human likelihood on the eve of perishing upon the margin of the Nile, Pharaoh's daughter came down to wash herself in the river, and was conducted to the spot where the infant lay. It had been so ordained that he should weep as she looked on; and so in a propitious moment the heart of the heathen princess was moved with compassion on the Hebrew child. Isaac is to human appearance on the

point of being slain in sacrifice—the altar is erected and the wood laid in order—the very knife is in his father's uplifted hand—and there seems to be but a breath between him and the eternal world—when lo! of a sudden a voice of mercy is heard from on high, and a ram, caught in a thicket by the horns, is taken as a ready substitute for that child of promise. David is in imminent danger of falling into the hands of Saul—he and his men are encompassed about so that they cannot by ordinary means accomplish their escape; but, just at that instant when the peril is at its height, a messenger comes to Saul himself, saying, “Haste thee and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land.” And so Saul, having other pressing business to attend to, leaves David to effect for himself, as he may, a seasonable flight. The righteous Lot, whose soul had been vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, is, so far as man can foresee, about to have the sanctuary of his private dwelling profaned by their lawless and violent intrusion; but, in a moment when neither they nor he can expect information, their designs are frustrated; and, being struck with blindness, they weary themselves to find the door. The jealous tyrant of Judea, in order that he may destroy the infant Saviour, commands all the babes of Bethlehem to be slaughtered; but, ere his savage edict can be executed, the holy child and his mother are on their way to Egypt. Peter, having been apprehended and put in prison, sleeps in chains, with one soldier on the right hand and another on the left; the prison, too, is doubly guarded, and it seems as if for the faithful apostle release were utterly impracticable; but, because he has yet more work to

do, a way is opened up for his escape. Through the black darkness of his cell a light shines—the chains fall from his hands—the iron gate opens of its own accord—and from one street to another he passes under an angel's conduct, until he gains a comfortable dwelling, where the disciples are gathered together praying.

But it is needless to multiply examples which will readily enough occur to the memories of all who consult Scripture for themselves. The case of Joseph alone, were there no other, shows, beyond all controversy, that, when God wills an end, he makes or finds a way. The brethren of Joseph think to frustrate his dreams, but God designs to fulfil them ; and this is but one link in the great concatenation of second causes. Judah takes occasion, from the appearance of the Ishmaelites, to suggest the sale of Joseph ; and the others, thinking it well if they can but gratify their revenge, accede to the proposal. Joseph is accordingly sold for *twenty*, as Jesus was afterwards betrayed for *thirty* pieces of silver. And so, while they spare his life, they subject him to slavery, which some say is worse than death.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

A FATHER'S GRIEF.

"AND Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."—Genesis xxxvii. 34.

We have already had repeated occasions of observing that wonderful concatenation of events and secondary causes which the Almighty made subservient in the case of Joseph, to the future good of the Israelites and of the world at large. And towards the conclusion of the last chapter, we saw how the sacred history of this extraordinary person illustrates the great truth, that, when Providence wills an end, it makes or finds a way. At the very moment when Joseph is on the point of perishing by his brethren's cruelty, a company of merchants pass by; and, the sale of his person being effected, he is brought down to that country in the management of whose affairs he is afterwards to take an active and most distinguished part.

His brethren, having thus got rid of one whom they deemed an insufferable annoyance, bethink themselves of the construction which they must put upon the villanous deed. The coat of many colours which had provoked their envy, is accordingly dipped by them

in blood; and with ingenious hypocrisy they present it to their kind-hearted father; affect to wonder whether this be indeed the garment, the history of which they knew full well, and thus awaken the horrible thought in his bosom that an evil beast of the field had rent in pieces the object of his love. The wicked stratagem takes effect accordingly; the single-hearted man suspects not the baseness of their natures, nor imagines them capable either of such barbarous cruelty or of such deep dissimulation. The bloody garment is before him, and cannot be mistaken; the story is so well contrived and so artfully told that no doubt exists in his bosom as to the nature of the calamity which had taken Joseph away. His heart bleeds to think that by so horrible a death Joseph should have perished in the wilderness; and, in the deep anguish of his soul, he exclaims—"It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."

Those who are themselves parents can, without much difficulty, put themselves for a little in his soul's stead, and may conceive the wonderful interest which the spectacle of that garment would excite. Ye know, perhaps, what it is to have been bereaved, in the course of Providence, of a beloved and engaging child; and ye can remember that, many days after you laid it in the grave, the eye often rested on the chair which it was wont to occupy, and the raiment which it was accustomed to put on. Every little memorial of its past existence was precious in your estimation; and rather than let it go from your possession you would cheerfully consent to part with the most valuable substance in your house. Yea, is it not true that, if

the stern necessity were laid upon you to give up all, the little token which reminded you of the beloved dead would be the very last thing that you would surrender? And if there could be found but one solitary corner in which you could deposit that precious object, would not the voice of nature bid you go and hide it in safety there till the time of inquisition was overpast? Is it not true, too, that, long even after the robes of mourning have been cast aside, the footsteps of affection may still be traced towards the spot in which the once lovely form moulders to its native dust; and that often, in the intervening hours between the sacred services of the Sabbath, the father and the mother may be seen finding their way, apart from the crowd of worshippers, to look upon yon little eminence, which holds within its narrow grasp the child whose voice was music to their ears, and whose looks are still engraved upon their hearts as with a pen of iron? Oh, yes, you may take from an affectionate heart the substance which, with great labour, has been gathered—you may call upon it to surrender the silver and the gold which, after long exertion and with much sweat, have been collected—you may command even that the last morsel of bread be taken away, but force it not to part with what it deems more sacred than all—the memorial that speaks to its deep sympathies of departed love.

Say, then, ye who may yourselves have wept over the flowers that fell untimely, what you conceived to have been Jacob's grief when it seemed as if all that remained to him of Joseph was but that coat, red with blood—*his own blood*, as the parent had every reason to believe. Even the melancholy pleasure is denied

him of looking on his corpse, and performing to it the rites of burial. It was a heavy consideration, too, that he had himself sent him on that errand ; for, although he could not have anticipated this issue, if he had suffered him to remain at home, it had not been. And was it for this only that he had so exquisitely loved him ? How sad to think that all his care should thus be rendered abortive—that the high hopes which he had entertained of him should be so suddenly and inexplicably dashed in pieces—that the greatest comfort of his old age should be in one day so unexpectedly taken away from him ! It might have been some consolation to him in the midst of his anguish, to be made aware of the particulars of his fate—to be told what were his dying words—to know even in what precise spot the accident had occurred. But all these things are involved in deepest mystery. Conjecture wearies itself in vain, and the heart of the patriarch is distracted with a variety of thoughts, even as Joseph's body is conceived by him to be rent in pieces. Could, even after much search, the bones of the deceased be found, it might somewhat relieve him to place them decently in the earth. But even this is impracticable ; and the afflicted parent can but rend his clothes, and cry with an exceeding bitter cry—Alas, my son, Joseph, my son, my son !

How the brethren of Joseph, who had occasioned this domestic tragedy, could stand in their father's presence and hear the voice of his agony, we pretend not to explain. Certain it is that the scene was eminently calculated to awaken sympathy in any heart not utterly insensible to the claims of humanity. To see an old man weep is, of itself, enough to move the

compassion of a stranger. But even the grey hairs of Jacob affect not his unmerciful sons. His tears and groans are without the power to bring them to a right mind. The inquiries which they could so well have answered, and which might have touched them to the quick, do not lead them to confession of their guilt; and, in the exercise of the basest hypocrisy, they who had wrought all this mischief rise up to bid him be comforted! What the sort of consolation was which they administered, the sacred narrative has not informed us. Probably, like many other heartless and senseless advisers on similar occasions, they counselled him to forget the circumstance, and try to banish it out of his mind. They know little of human nature, however, who suppose that such counsel, however sagely given or eloquently uttered, can be of much service to a genuine mourner. Unless when the heart has been rendered hard by habit and depravity, its language is—*Rather let me remember the dead than converse with the living.* It is nothing better than a gross insult to our nature to bid us forget those who we feel would, in such circumstances, have tenderly remembered us. It is to bid us dismiss from our bosoms every generous feeling, and break through every obligation which gratitude or friendship can impose. It is an injurious reflection upon those for whom we mourn, as if, forsooth, they were unworthy of our tears, and had no peculiar claim upon our regard and affection while they lived. Yea, more than all this, it is to reproach the very God of Nature, who has rendered us susceptible of these emotions. We hesitate not to say that it is as impious as it is unmannerly to bid us forget

those who, if *they* had been the survivors, would have wept in secret for us ; and, after even the lapse of years, have held our memory in veneration. Nor do we know a more unkindly shock that can be given to a rightly-constituted mind than that which is occasioned by such cold-hearted suggestions. Even Job's friends, miserable comforters though they were, were yet better than these. "They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights ; *and none spake a word unto him ; for they saw that his grief was very great.*"

Sundry other considerations the family of Jacob might address to him ; but they were all of them ineffectual to moderate his grief. The inspired penman tells us that "he refused to be comforted ; for he said, I will go down to the grave mourning for my son."

The behaviour of Jacob on this occasion cannot be altogether vindicated ; for, although the considerations which his ungodly children might suggest were inadequate to allay his grief, there were others which he ought, as a religious man, to have pondered and profited by. It was, indeed, a heavy trial which he was called upon to bear. But there was a God on high whose aid he should have humbly supplicated. It was, too, an *unexpected* calamity. But he should have considered in whose hands the government of human affairs rested, and have acknowledged that his pleasure was the best. Joseph had, moreover, been to him a great comfort all along. But he should now have inquired with himself whether he had not somewhat idolised him ; and whether, therefore, he needed not this dispensation to wean his affections back again to God. It was sad to think that the bones of Joseph

should lie unburied in the wilderness, and that he should never again behold him in the present world. But he ought to have taken into account the doctrine of a life to come, and to have cherished the hope of renewing in heaven the intercourse that had delighted him on earth. Yea, more, he ought to have considered that his own loss was Joseph's gain, and that it is far better for a good man to die than to live. These and the like arguments should have been duly weighed by the afflicted patriarch ; and then, instead of saying, " I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning," he would have answered with a man still more severely tried, " The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Having made these remarks upon the conduct of Jacob, we may not conclude this chapter without mentioning some of those considerations that ought to weigh with Christian parents, when suddenly called upon, in the course of Providence, to part with the children who are dear to them. Let it be considered, then—

1. *That God is the wise and righteous Governor of the world.*—Did his purposes require it, those for whom we mourn would have been longer spared. The designs of his Providence were such as to render it expedient that they should go hence. It is not for us, therefore, to doubt or question the equity of his arrangements. We cannot, it is true, discern *all* the ends which he has in view, nor can we define the reasons of his acting ; for it is only a small portion of his ways that we discover, and his judgments are often past finding out. But it ought to satisfy us,

that He is infinite alike in wisdom and in mercy ; and that, although clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. He has an absolute right to the creatures whom he has made ; his sovereignty over them is unquestionable ; and who, then, is he that replieth against God ? The life which he gave he can resume at pleasure ; the gifts which, for wise ends, he conferred, he may, when he sees meet, withdraw. If there were, indeed, any reason for suspecting that he acted without design, it might be allowable to declaim against his dispensations. But, since all his works are known unto him from the beginning of the world—since his decrees are righteous and his ends gracious—the voice of sober wisdom is—Be still, and know that he is God. True, his way is often in the waters, and his footsteps are not known ; but just so much the greater cause is there for humility and acquiescence on our part. Having multiplied proofs of his wisdom and power, of his goodness and mercy, our business is to bow submissively to his sceptre ; and, when perplexed with difficulties beyond our strength, to own that, as the heavens are higher than the earth, his thoughts and ways are higher than ours.

2. *It deserves to be considered, that those for whom we mourn were, by our dedication of them to God in baptism, NOT OUR OWN.*—From the moment when we so held them up, we voluntarily surrendered them to his disposal. Even although this had not been done by us, indeed, he might have done with them as he willed ; but, by our so doing, we formally consented to this arrangement. We then, as plainly as actions could testify, said—“ Lord, here are these our little

ones; we give them over to thee to be dealt with as thy wisdom shall deem best. Let them be but thine, and we shall be content. It will be enough for us, if, when taken from our embraces, they be admitted into heaven. We know that, if thou wilt take charge of them, they shall be in far better keeping than our own; and all that we ask of thee is, to receive them to thyself, at whatsoever period of life thy wisdom shall ordain." Such is the language of genuine piety when standing by the baptismal waters. If, therefore, our children shall have been brought up by us in the fear of God, and have acted in a manner suited to the engagements made by us in their name, we ought to consider that, when they are summoned away from us by death, God, to whom they were devoted, not only asserts his own claim to *them*, but puts *our* sincerity to the test; that in his own house we voluntarily committed them to his disposal; and that we there signified, before many witnesses, our readiness to part with them whenever he should issue the command. Wherefore, then, should we unduly mourn, as if, forsooth, we took it ill that he vindicated his claim, or as if it repented us of having dedicated them to his service? Do we well to be angry at him for doing that which we ourselves assented to, or is it decent in us to wish that covenant broken which bound us to acquiesce in his appointments? No; rather let us say—Take, Lord, that which is thine own, and dispose our wills at once to rest contented in thine, and to perform with cheerfulness that act of submission which we vowed to render.

3. *Let Christian parents consider that, if their children lived and died in the Lord, it is better for them—*

selves to have been taken away than to have continued longer on the earth.—To them the gates of immortality have been opened, and through them they have passed into the city. To disease and suffering they are liable no more. While others mourn, they rejoice. Crowns of celestial brightness have been placed upon their heads, and garments of unsullied purity have been given them to wear. They are before the throne of glory, and all which can gratify the spiritual nature of man is theirs, and theirs for ever. They would not be tempted back again to earth by all the gold and silver which it holds within its bosom. Not even the absolute sovereignty of this lower world would avail to draw them for an instant from their high abodes. To refuse, therefore, to be comforted on their account is nothing better than to regret that their happiness is complete—to take it amiss that they have clean escaped from the infirmities and pollutions of the flesh. It is to grudge that a new gem has been set in the celestial cabinet—that the heavenly inhabitants have welcomed a kindred spirit to their hallowed circle. It is as if we lamented that another voice had been added to those which make sweet music in the upper sanctuary—yea, as if we even but coldly loved what we so passionately mourn for. Life and immortality having been brought to light by the gospel, we are not to mourn as those that are without hope. Enough for us that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and that they who fall asleep in him are beyond the reach of all storms, purified from all stains, and pronounced more than conquerors. Oh! could a good man but look through the thin veil that separates the world of sense from the world of spirits, and gain but a tran-

sient view of the holy region where the redeemed dwell—could he but hear with his living ears the sounds of unmingled joy that ring through the celestial arches, and, out of the innumerable numbers that do service there, could he but distinguish one whose untimely departure he lamented, his sorrow would be converted into great joy ; and, the vision with which he was favoured being ended, he would only with earnestness desire to be himself so clothed upon with the house which is from heaven.

4. *Let it be considered that the separation between the faithful shall not be perpetual.*—But a little while, and again they shall meet to part no more. Friendships that were based on Christian principle shall be again revived ; the mutual interchange of thought shall be free and unreserved ; the ties of affection shall be made indissoluble ; and throughout eternal ages the parent and the child shall rejoice in one another's joy. The garment of the flesh being laid aside, they shall shine forth in the robes of immortality, and even as those who have been long parted upon earth welcome one another at their meeting here, so they whom death had sundered shall break forth into singing when the time of their restoration is complete. Why, then, be swallowed up with over much sorrow ? Why be as those who have no hope beyond the grave ? Only let it be our endeavour and fervent desire to be prepared for our own change. Let us pray the Holy Spirit of God that he would enable us to benefit by every afflictive dispensation ; and so ours shall in due time be the blessedness of those who, after sowing in tears, reap in joy. “ Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from

tears ; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord ; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."—
Jeremiah xxxi. 16–17.

CHAPTER FIFTH.

JOSEPH IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE.

"Let high birth triumph ! what can be more great ?
Nothing—but *merit in a low estate.*"

"Oh, that clear honour
Were purchased by the merit of the wearer !
How many, then, should cover, that stand bare !
How many be commanded, that command !"

THE dignity of religious principle never appears to greater advantage than when its possessor is placed in circumstances of obscurity and meanness. It is an easy matter to be contented in the midst of affluence ; but to be resigned and cheerful when wonted comforts are withdrawn, is an exercise of soul which cannot, without great self-discipline, be performed. Nothing more easy than to be honest, when the means of rendering to all their dues are plentifully in one's hands ; but to maintain the same high sense of moral obligation when temptations abound on the right hand and the left is an effort of virtue as heroic as it is severe. Adversity, is indeed, the surest test of character ; and we doubt not that, in the great day when all actions shall be weighed in an even balance, not a few of the fair deeds, that have been applauded by the world in whose face they were performed, shall be pronounced much inferior in point of moral value to the humble and every-day virtues of

domestic life. A great prince, who has ample means of charity at his disposal, may scatter many blessings over the land in which he bears rule—may even carry with him into the cottages of the poor the comforts which they stand in need of—and, what with the sums which he expends in providing for the safety of widows, and the instruction of orphans, may be lauded as the most liberal benefactor of his race. But, after all, he may have denied himself almost nothing in accomplishing those works of beneficence, and the moral worth of his charity may be far less than that of an obscure man whose name is not heard of beyond the neighbourhood in which he dwells. Only conceive that the latter has divided his own morsel of bread with another more indigent than himself—that, to benefit a neighbour whom he knew to be in want, he refrained from taking the use of that which, with the sweat of his own brow, he had lawfully acquired—and that, out of his own scanty earnings, he dedicated a portion which with difficulty he could spare to the relief of those who were ready to perish;—and then say, whether such an one be not indeed more largely liberal than the mighty monarch who *gives* indeed, but who gives out of an abundance which he can well spare, and with an ease that *costs him nothing*. The one does *well* in that *he gives so much*; the other does yet *better*, in that *he gives at all*. The handful of meal which the one parts with, is, morally speaking, worth all the thousands of gold and silver which the other bestows. It costs him more, and in Heaven's estimation, it *is* more. Thus it is likewise in regard to every other virtue. By how much the more difficult is its exercise, by so much the

more amiable is its lustre. The meaner the estate in which excellence is cultivated, the more dignified and venerable the agent. The flower may indeed "blush unseen," but the sweetness of its fragrance finds its way to heaven, and, when the time for transplanting comes, it will bloom with immortal beauty in the paradise above. It has been beautifully remarked by Dr Paley, that a conscientious slave who performs his duty conscientiously, is a person of extraordinary virtue, and that, however gentle the master of such a slave may be, he is yet in point of real virtue inferior to the slave. For, the condition of the one being much more hard than the other's, the relative duty is, if we may so speak, more expensive and precious.

And thus, too, it was with Joseph, a servant in Egypt. There existed many temptations to seduce him from the path of integrity. The love of liberty is natural to all ; and Joseph, without doubt, if he had so pleased, might have discovered opportunities enough of effecting his emancipation. With the gold of Potiphar at his command, he might have so enriched himself as to render this at least a possible occurrence. Already he had been sold for twenty pieces of silver ; and very soon, by dishonest speculation, he might have doubled that sum. Every article in the house was at his command ; and, placed as he was at the head of the establishment, it would have been easy for him to persuade the inferior servants to assist him in his designs. There were those, no doubt (as there are in every great man's house), who would have greedily closed with the terms, and, at the prospect of enriching themselves a little, would have helped him to escape. But Joseph had carried with him into

Egypt the principles of virtue and religion. It was enough for him that Providence had ordered his lot there, and that to the situation which he held sacred duties were attached. No matter that, by an imperceptible series of purloinings, he might be able to collect enough to effect his liberation. It sufficed that a sacred trust had been put into his hands, and that he might not, with a good conscience, violate it. No matter that even suspicion might be silent in regard to him, and that a thought of his dishonesty might not enter into the imagination of his employer. Enough for him that the eyes of the Lord were in every place, beholding the evil and the good. And what although there might be many to countenance his schemes of spoliation, when a day was ordained of God on which they would all stand speechless together before the witness of secret things? Joseph, therefore, maintained his integrity, and would not let it go. Not even to regain the liberty which is dear to every soul would he defraud his master of the smallest sum. Rather would he continue in servitude until death, than escape from it by the slightest transgression of equity and truth.

1. *We are hence taught the advantages resulting from a religious education.*—Had Joseph gone down into that strange land, unacquainted with the great principles of moral obligation, he would have fallen an easy prey to the great adversary of souls. The scenes that surrounded him were widely different from those to which in other days he had been accustomed. Hitherto he had spent his life in comparative seclusion, and known little or nothing of the busy world. Now, he was placed, so to say, in the very *heart* of

it; and many temptations there must have been to draw his mind aside from God. The idolatrous usages of the place—the buzz and bustle connected with a great man's house, and the new companions with whom he had to mingle—must of necessity have operated unfavourably upon any young person whose principles had not previously been formed. He was now away from parental control, and could not be called to account by his venerable father for any of the excesses into which he might go. But the lessons of his younger days were not forgotten; and he remained faithful to the Lord's covenant. From the presence of the Almighty he knew well that he could no where flee—that in Egypt as well as in Canaan the eye of omniscience rested on him—and that, although even a confederacy of sinners should entice him, he might not with impunity consent.

Let the young man, who has been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, derive to himself instruction from the example. When called in the course of Providence to leave the paternal dwelling, carry with you into the house of the stranger the principles which from your earliest remembrance you have been taught to hold sacred; forget not your obligations to fear and honour *your father's God*. Cast not aside the restraints of religion because you are about to be freed from the control of parental discipline; cherish with pious care the serious dispositions which the counsels and prayers of affectionate parents were the means of producing on your hearts; avoid the snares against which they cautioned you; treasure up in your memories the maxims they delivered; and retain a grateful sense of the interest

which they took in your moral and religious culture. Should it ever be your lot to go into a place where the authority of God is but little respected, consider that it is still your duty to stand fast in the faith; and should there be those who would persuade you to join them in the exercises of sin, let your determination still be to acknowledge the higher claims which your religious education has imposed; so you may have reason to expect that the Lord will "prosper you;" by walking uprightly you will walk surely; those, even, who most dislike your *religion* will respect your *integrity*; and, like Joseph, you shall find favour in the sight of God and of man.

2. *When Satan finds one temptation ineffectual he has recourse to another.*—Joseph was now a young man in the flower of his age, goodly and well-favoured, when lo! the mistress of the house, whose duty it was to see that all the domestics conducted themselves with propriety, did herself (influenced by the basest of passions that can lodge within a woman's heart) solicit him to commit a crime, than which murder itself is scarcely more black and atrocious. She, who had solemnly pledged herself to conjugal fidelity, who ought to have been the pattern to all beneath her of domestic virtue, and who could not but know that a breach of the marriage vow is what reason and religion alike abhor, *she*, nevertheless, abandoned to the worst appetites of her nature, solicits Joseph, *her servant*, to stain her husband's honour. Sin is indeed degrading; passion is the most tyrannous of masters. This woman, whose position in society might have gained for her respect, lowers herself to the imperious demands of guilty appetite, and supplicates from the

hired servant in her house the gratification of her bad desires. She who had only to bid one servant go, and another come, is carried captive by her own lusts, and led by them into a far more abject bondage than that which her meanest slaves endured. *Joseph* was a slave because he could not help it, but *she* brings herself voluntarily into a more degrading thralldom—contrary to all law, human and divine, she solicits him to violate the sanctity of the marriage covenant.

To show the vileness of this sin, the most odious titles are given to it in Scripture. The prophet *Jeremiah* calls it, villany; *Job* speaks of it as a heinous crime—as an iniquity that ought to be punished by the judge; *Abimelech*, when he found himself in danger of even unwittingly falling into it, expresses horror at the thought—"In what have I offended thee that thou hast brought on me and my kingdom this great sin;" *Solomon* tells us, that the adulterer is much more dishonest than the thief. And no wonder; for by how much the better any thing is that is stolen, by so much the worse is the theft. But adultery steals that which is more valuable than gold or silver; it robs a man of his honour, disturbs the peace of families, and provokes implacable dissensions. Yea, it robs posterity too, and takes from children their legitimate inheritance. It is not strange, therefore, that all nations, whether civilized or savage, have discountenanced it in their laws, and that religion has issued against it its most severe prohibitions.

The virtue of *Joseph*, however, was not to be overcome even by the repeated solicitations of this impudent woman. While too many others would readily have complied with the solicitation, and regarded it

as a frolic of youth ; he, having his mind enlightened by the Spirit of God, viewed it as a *great wickedness*.

Every argument which could be brought to bear upon the sensual nature was addressed to him. She, who tempted him, was a *woman of rank—his mistress*. Her superior station “might seem to have the force of a command ;” and through her favour he might have been advanced to great preferment in the land.

Every opportunity, too, existed for the commission of the sin. “There was none of the men in the house within.” Suspicion itself could not imagine that such a foul enormity was perpetrated ; and there was no possible apprehension of discovery.

Joseph was, moreover, arrived at that period of life when the sensual passions are most strong. And what added much to the temptation was, that it was frequently reiterated. “She spake to him day by day ;” and by lascivious gestures and looks, no doubt, were her words seconded.

But Joseph, being born of God, departed from the iniquity. No matter that she was his mistress, and that, by her guilty patronage, he might be promoted to dignity in Egypt. He would rather lie in the dust as an upright man, than rise to a bad eminence by sin. No matter that secrecy and concealment favoured the temptation ; enough for him that God’s eye was in the most secret places, and that there was no shadow of death in which the workers of iniquity could hide themselves. No matter that the corruptions of his own nature might second her solicitation ; enough for him that he was commanded by the law of God to mortify the inclinations of the flesh. And no matter, too, that the solicitation was repeated ; enough for him

that the authority of God over him could never change, but was equally sacred at all times. "Therefore he refused, and said unto his master's wife, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He knew well that, to comply with her wishes, would be to violate the most sacred claims of honour—to abuse the master of the house, whose confidence in him was so great—to be unjust to man as well as impure towards God; and accordingly he asks, How can I do this great wickedness?

3. *How important is it that the heart be habitually impressed with a sense of the Divine presence.* The fear of the Lord is *clean*. Other considerations are altogether ineffectual to make a young man purify his way. They may preserve a man's lips from speaking guile, but they can never put away frowardness from his heart. They may withhold him from the more gross exercises of licentiousness; but they can never turn away his eyes from viewing vanity. Occasionally they may keep him from the *practice*, but never from the *love* of sin. On the contrary, let a man be thoroughly and habitually alive to a persuasion of the Divine omniscience; and he will hate sin as an abominable and accursed thing. Such a principle will go with him into every department of trust and to every sphere of action. If a master, he will render unto his domestics that which is just and equal, knowing that he himself also has a master in heaven; if a servant, he will act not with eye service as unto men, but in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord Jesus Christ; if engaged in the transactions of business, he will put far away from him the false balance and the deceitful weight, not because the world might cry "shame," but

because they both are an abomination to the Lord. He will mortify the lusts of the flesh, not because their gratification might prove injurious to his health or ruinous to his fortune, but because his body, as well as his spirit is God's. Such a principle will give to him the power to conquer or the will to suffer; it will be as if he heard at all times a voice behind him saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.

4. *We may hence see the propriety of flying from all tempting occasions of sin.* Joseph would not be alone with his mistress. "He fled and got him out." And so it must be with every one who would in the end overcome any temptation. The mind must not be allowed to become familiar with evil. Extreme crime may appear remote and inaccessible, but there are a thousand by-paths that slope the way to it. A wise man will ever desire to keep as far away as possible from the sphere of infection. By little and little the fine edge of conscience is taken off—lust having conceived, brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. Hence the salutary caution, "Go not in the way of evil; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

CHAPTER SIXTH.

DISSIMULATION AND REVENGE.

"The adulteress! what a theme for angry verse!"

IN the preceding chapter we have seen the honourable integrity of Joseph in the situation which he held under Potiphar, and the lofty principle which he displayed under the most urgent temptations to crime. We have noticed, too, the special aggravations of that sin which his ungodly and impudent mistress solicited him to commit—a sin, than which, in point of baseness and malignity, murder itself is scarcely worse. The character of Potiphar's wife, indeed, cannot fail to excite the strongest feelings of disapproval in every mind not utterly insensible to the calls of virtue and of honour. We behold in her a woman throwing aside the native modesty of her sex; not sparing to give expression in language to thoughts which it is criminal to cherish even for an instant in secret; breaking, as a thing of nought, the most sacred covenant which one human being can enter into with another—a covenant made under a solemn appeal to heaven, and the breach of which the God of heaven will one day most terribly avenge;—casting aside the obligations which gratitude, as well as truth and justice, had imposed, and soliciting one far beneath her in point of station to stain the honour of her absent lord. Surely, with truth did the wise man observe,

"More bitter than death is the woman whose heart is snares and nets ; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her."

The conduct and behaviour of Joseph, on the contrary, are worthy of everlasting remembrance. Young man though he was—having the prospect of bettering his condition by her patronage—solicited by her day after day, and plied by all the varied arts of speech and of gesture which an evil woman knows so advantageously to employ—possessing, withal, the most favourable opportunities for criminal gratification, he resisted her importunities to the uttermost—and, pondering the higher obligations which duty to his master and to his God imposed on him, he observed, "There is none greater in this house than I ; neither hath my master kept anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife ; how, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ?" Yea, even when at last she lays hold upon his person, he leaves his garment in her hand. For better it is that he should go from the house naked with a *good* conscience, than stay in it, though clothed in purple with a *bad* one.

But now, this woman, disappointed in the gratification of her will, bethinks herself how she may best satisfy her revenge. Because Joseph will not yield to her base desires, she must next contrive how if possible to make him repent of his firmness. One passion having been frustrated, it is succeeded by another. The sense of wounded pride is quick within her bosom, and lust at length gives way to malice. That garment, which, in order that he might escape from her importunities, Joseph had left behind him, she affects to regard as the token of his villany ; and

so the very pledge of his innocence is converted by her into a sign of his worthlessness. (See Genesis xxxix, 13-20.) A variety of evil passions now wrought mightily within her bosom. Not only the frustration of her long-deferred hopes, but the consciousness of her own degradation—the thought, so painful to be borne, that her beauty was contemned, and all her ingenuity fruitless—the mortifying reflection that her approaches had been slighted, not by one of her own rank or station merely, but by an inferior—a servant in the house—a stranger, too, who, when he came amongst them, had nothing that he might call his own; these, and the like considerations, stung her to the quick, and set her on resenting what she conceived to be an injury or insult to her charms.

It is not unlikely that with these feelings of rage that of fear was in some measure blended. Seeing that Joseph had “fled forth,” she might be apprehensive lest he should go to Potiphar and make a full disclosure of her baseness; and, if so, she could expect nothing but to be driven contemptuously out of the house which her wickedness dishonoured, and cast abroad on society with the vile mark of the adulteress impressed upon her character. Thus to be exposed to her husband’s wrath, and subjected to public scorn—thus to forfeit the respectability in which she had hitherto been held, and become odious in the estimation of all with whom she had hitherto associated, would doubtless add in no slight degree to the rage which had been kindled by Joseph’s opposition to her importunities; and so accordingly we read, that “She laid up Joseph’s garment until her lord came home. And she spake unto him, saying, “The Hebrew servant

which thou hast brought unto us came in to mock me. And as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment with me and fled out."

We are hence taught that there is no baseness of which the human heart is not capable. This woman is first of all unchaste in thought, then impudent in look, froward in speech, and immodest in behaviour. False to her husband, she contrives how, by the advantages of secrecy and concealment, she may bring the innocent into her snare. Finding her plans and artifices unavailing, she gives way to cruelty and revenge. That these new passions may be gratified, she invents a gross and unfounded calumny—charges Joseph with the baseness of making attempts upon her virtue—holds up the very garment that was the evidence of his chastity as a testimony against him—and feigns the utmost indignation that one who was supported by Potiphar's bounty should meditate his dishonour.

The servants are accordingly called in; with her "much fair speech" and well-dissembled looks she awakens their sympathy; and when, at length, her lord returns, she holds up before *him*, too, that garment as a memorial of his servant's worthlessness!

There was such an air of likelihood about the story that Potiphar received it without suspicion. Her protestations, her indignation, her anger, her tears, so coloured the narrative, that it could not fail to make a strong impression on the mind of the astonished man. So deceitful was this woman's nature, that every possible expedient we may well suppose was adopted by her to screen her own guilt, and transfer the conviction of it to the innocent. She who had herself soli-

cited Joseph would no doubt declaim against adultery as one of the blackest and deadliest sins—profess the utmost horror at the idea of dishonouring the marriage bed—pretend the most thorough reverence for her husband's authority and the most devoted attachment to his person—speak in terms of the most unqualified indignation concerning the insolence of the slave who had dared to cast his eyes upon her ; and, appealing to Potiphar as her own protector, no less than to his feelings as an injured man, demand that Joseph, who had behaved so ungratefully, should be expelled thenceforward from the service.

Accordingly, we find that, “when Potiphar heard her words, his wrath was kindled. And he took Joseph, and put him into the prison where the King's prisoners were bound.”

In what terms Joseph sought to vindicate himself from this unjust charge we are not told. Some have thought it probable that he chose rather to lie under the iniquitous reproach than publish the dishonour of a master who, till now, had dealt with him so kindly. Conscious of his own integrity, he was perhaps contented to bear the wrong rather than let the account of his mistress's perfidy take wing through the court of Pharaoh. It was at least enough to support him under every wrong that he had the testimony of a good conscience, and that sooner or later God, whose commandment he had kept, would use means to clear up his fame. Be this, however, as it may, Joseph was, in this matter as well as many others, a type of Jesus, who was unjustly aspersed and calumniated by those whom he sought to reclaim from the paths of error. As Joseph was charged with a crime which

his soul abhorred, so Jesus was accused of sins by which he was in all respects undefiled. As that garment of Joseph, which was the pledge of his innocence, was made use of as an argument for his guilt, so the miraculous works which Jesus performed as a testimony that he came from God were construed into presumptive evidence that he was in league with Beelzebub. As the false accusation of Joseph's mistress prevailed with Potiphar, so the misrepresentations of the Jews weighed with Pilate against Jesus; and as the one was unrighteously imprisoned, the other was unjustly put to death. As Joseph suffered for his mistress's sin, Christ suffered on account of other men's iniquities: "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. And the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all."

Joseph's imprisonment is, however, made under God the way to his future elevation. "He is put into the place where the king's prisoners are bound." The purposes of Providence were that Joseph should one day be ruler over all the land of Egypt; and with a view to this, his master's mind is so directed and overruled that the very place assigned for his captivity is one which makes him acquainted in due time with Pharaoh's butler, through whose instrumentality his name is first mentioned in the royal court.

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.—His purposes cannot be defeated by the rage of man. Joseph's imprisonment is but a step to his subsequent promotion, even as Christ's descent into the grave was but in the way to his future glorification. Who that looked upon Joseph

in his sad confinement could have supposed that he should afterwards be the chief ruler in the kingdom—that on him, under God, the welfare of the state, the safety of his father's house, and the maintenance of the church should depend? And who, in like manner, that saw by the eye of sense alone the blessed Jesus lodged in a narrow tomb, could have supposed that, three days thereafter, he would break the bands of the sepulchre, and, after forty days more, ascend in calm majesty to the heaven of heavens? Yet unlikely as these futurities were to human view, they came literally to pass. Joseph is cast into the dungeon, and his feet are laid in irons; but the word of the Lord at length comes, and from the deepest obscurity he is exalted to high honour. The body of Jesus is laid, too, in the grave, and a company of soldiers are stationed near to guard the spot; but because God has been pleased to raise him thence, the grave itself cannot contain him any longer. An angel from heaven rolls back the stone, and, like a giant refreshed with sleep, the conqueror goes forth. And now that many centuries have gone by, he still sits at the right hand of his father in the heavens, dispensing liberally to thousands and tens of thousands the blessings of his purchase. A name has been given unto him, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." All things are put under his feet, and a multitude which no man can number partake of his bounty. But the path of his humiliation was that which led to his exaltation. It was because he stooped to so low an estate that God has given him a name above every name, and set him higher than the kings of any land. It was because he

drank of the brook in the way, that he at length lifted up his head on high. The cross was the way to his crown, as Joseph's dungeon was the way to Joseph's promotion.

Thus, too, it is often with Christians on their way to final glory. Their afflictions contribute to their true happiness. They are brought low in order that they may be marvellously helped. Death itself is one necessary step that must be taken by them in their march to heaven. Their bodies must be subject to the dishonours of the grave ere they become fashioned like to that of their ascended Lord. But He who heard the cry of his afflicted servants in Egypt will give commandment concerning their bones. He who, at his fit and appointed time, brought Joseph out of his confinement, will, at the period which his wisdom has ordained, cause the grave to open its portals that his redeemed may go forth. To the eye of sense that is indeed a dark and cheerless region, but to the eye of faith the prisoners of the grave are in safe keeping. The voice of the archangel shall sound through all its caverns, and they who dwell in the dust shall awake fresh as the morning. Fear not, then, oh, Christian! to descend into the narrow house. Thy confinement there is only for a season. The stern hold of the sepulchre shall be broken by the hand of the Mighty, thy bones shall rest in hope, and the Lord's time being come,

"Legions of angels can't confine thee there."

CHAPTER SEVENTH.

GOD IS GLORIFIED IN THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

*"Deep in unfathomable mines,
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will."*

WE have seen Joseph hated of his brethren, cast by them into a pit, and at length taken thence that he might be sold to the Ishmaelites for a paltry sum of money ; we have followed him into Egypt, and marked his behaviour there, until, for his conscientious regard to the rules of moral obligation, he was wrongfully imprisoned ; and we are now to consider his elevation from that low estate to high preferment and honour under Pharoah. The curious circumstances which, under Divine Providence, led to the result, are narrated in the 40th and 41st chapters of Genesis, with a simplicity which renders superfluous any attempt at explanation. Instead, therefore, of going over them in minute detail, we shall gather a few lessons of instruction from the fact itself.

"But God was with Joseph, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt ; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house."—
Acts vii. 10.

1. *The sufferings of good men for conscience sake redound to the glory of God.*—Thus it was in the case of Joseph, who chose rather to endure the evils of imprisonment than enjoy the pleasures of sin. Had his troubles been less, the divine care of him would have been less conspicuous. As it was, it so happened that the attributes of God were strikingly illustrated. Thus was the divine power glorified in raising him from a most obscure to a most honourable condition. It would have surprised one less to hear that Joseph was taken from the house of Potiphar than from a prisoner's cell to be ruler over all the land of Egypt. But the state in which he lay being the most abject possible, proof was thus given that nothing is too hard for God, but that with him all things are possible. Joseph is allowed to fall into the very depths of affliction, that the divine hand may be more wonderfully exercised in raising him up.

Thus, too, it has frequently been with God's actings towards his people. He lets them oftentimes be reduced to the most grievous straits, that his power in delivering them may be the more unambiguously manifested. He first brings them low, and then he marvellously helps them. Their extremity is His opportunity. As the hour immediately before the dawn of morning is the darkest in the whole night, so the time of His interposition is that at which earthly hope and earthly help are most improbable. It was when Abraham was, to all human appearance, on the very point of being deprived of an affectionate wife, and of being abandoned in consequence to extreme sorrow of heart, that Pharaoh and his house were visited with great plagues, and the restoration of Sarah ensued. It

was when the goods of Lot were violently taken away that God stirred up his servant Abraham to vindicate the cause of the oppressed. It was when Hagar had renounced all hope of obtaining a drop of water to cool the burning tongue of her afflicted boy, and his death by thirst seemed inevitable, that a fountain of water was opened up before her in the desert. It was when the children of Israel were pressed hard by the Egyptians from behind—when escape on either side seemed impossible—and the waters of the Red Sea were before them, that Moses stretched his hand over the deep, and a way was opened up for them to pass over. It was when Lazarus had lain four days in the grave, and the prospect of his reanimation was as unlikely as could be, that Jesus, travelling in the greatness of his strength, came from beyond Jordan to Bethany, and turned into joy the mourning of Martha and Mary. It was when He himself was locked up in the sepulchre, and the hopes of his followers had all but expired—when the Jews were prepared to triumph over him as an impostor, and, to the view of sense, his religion was on the eve of being utterly extinguished—it was *then* that assurance was given unto all men that he was the Son of God. Had he even come down of a sudden from the cross on which he was bound, or, shortly after giving up the ghost, again performed the functions of a living man, the divine power would have been less signally illustrated. But when, after having hung in agony there, and poured out his precious blood, he was taken down a motionless and breathless corpse, the sepulchre in which that corpse was placed made sure by a stone having been rolled upon the mouth of it, the stone itself sealed, and a

band of Roman soldiers stationed to guard the spot, when one day after another revolved ere any change was witnessed, and the soldiers still continued to watch on ; when, after all this, and notwithstanding these precautions, he came forth as he foretold, his resurrection was shown to be indeed "the Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes." The records of Ecclesiastical History, too, can tell that, often when the cause of religion seemed most hopeless, instruments for its advancement were unexpectedly raised up. God himself made a way for the enlargement of his church, and, from the ashes of his martyred saints, reared a rich and plenteous harvest of Christian fruit. Dioclesian, the most bloody persecutor of the Christians, was succeeded on the imperial throne by Constantine, their defender. The Papal superstition was at its height when the reformation commenced. The wrath of wicked men raged furiously, darkness overspread the earth, and gross darkness the people, the Bible was an interdicted book, and the tone of morals was as low as could be, when Luther was raised up to assert the rights of the human understanding, to restore to the nations of Europe the key of knowledge, and to break the accursed chain which had been fastened upon the consciences of men. Who does not know, in like manner, that the bold and manly forehead of Knox was lifted up in Scotland at the very time when the rage of persecution was most furious, and the enemies of Protestantism, as if knowing that their time was short, made themselves drunk with the blood of saints?

Many similar illustrations might be given. These, however, may suffice to show that God's time for delivering his people is the fittest and the best. When

their ability is least, his power is mightily displayed. When the sea is agitated into a storm, and the ship is like to be broken, he says to the raging wave, "Peace, be still." He allows the winds to rage, and the floods to lift up their voice for a while, in order that it may be seen how much more mighty is the still small voice of His Providence than the noise of many waters.

His wisdom, too, is thus illustrated in making use of the most unlikely instruments to effect his purposes. Joseph's imprisonment, as we have already seen, was but one step to his promotion. Events and circumstances, which seemed but remotely, if at all, to concern him, bore, under Providence, upon his subsequent fortunes. The imprisonment of two persons, and the intercourse which he had with them—their dreams in one night, and their account of them in the morning—his interpretation of those dreams, and the literal accomplishment of his predictions—the restoration of the butler to royal favour—the dream of Pharaoh himself—the anxiety which he felt for an interpreter of it—the suggestion of the butler, now conscience-stricken for his neglect of a person whom he had promised to remember, and whom he had now, for two full years, allowed to lie in obscure confinement—these, and all the other circumstances of the history, formed a series of secondary causes, the result of which no human sagacity could have foreseen. But God knew the end from the beginning. In his hand they were subservient to a great end; and it lay not within the compass of human power to frustrate or counteract them in the slightest. Here, as in Ezekiel's vision, there was a wheel in the midst of a wheel; and the motions that seemed most contrary were so ad-

justed as to forward the general design. Had Joseph not suffered wrongfully at the hands of Potiphar, he would not have become acquainted with the butler, who first mentioned his name at Pharoah's court. Or had his imprisonment ended *before* the two years expired, something might have occurred to remove him beyond that person's knowledge. But, as it was, his imprisonment prepared the way for the mention of his name, and the *continuation of his imprisonment* for the execution of the Sovereign's command. Need we here stop to show that the like has often taken place in the course of God's dealings with his people, and that, in reviewing the events of their history, they have had cause to admire and adore the wisdom by which his dispensations were conducted! "He leads them by a way that they know not," but a *right* way notwithstanding, "that they may go to a city of habitation."

Thus, too, is his *goodness* glorified. Holy men, when made to suffer for righteousness' sake, are visited with precious consolation. This consolation they would not have tasted of had they been always prosperous. It is then that the divine promises are felt to be exceeding great and precious. It is then that divine strength is magnified in their weakness. The joy with which a stranger cannot intermeddle is diffused over their souls, and the peace of God, which passes understanding, fills their hearts. Such, we cannot doubt, was the experience of Joseph when his feet were laid in irons. The remembrance of that moral victory which, through grace, he had won, would be better to him than all riches. The Lord being with him, all things were his. Such, too, has

been the comfortable experience of hundreds and hundreds more, who, from obeying God rather than man, have been subjected to temporal inconveniences. Comforted by their Lord's presence, exiled saints have made the desert echo with hymns of praise, and martyrs have sung joyfully in the midst of the fire. It is in affliction, and under severe trial, that the truths of religion are felt as cordials to the spirit; and better far than the abundance of corn and wine are the pledges which are then received of a Father's love. What although the path of preferment was shut up for a season against that righteous man, when he carried with him into his obscurity the approbation of Heaven? and what although no helping hand was extended to deliver him, when the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible, would in due time reward him for his secret worth? Were he even to perish in the place of his confinement, and no tear of regret to be shed over his remains, his spirit, he knew, would wing its flight to a purer region, and his present sufferings be crowned with an eternal weight of glory. Well, indeed, has the poet said,—

“Affliction is the good man's shining scene;
Prosperity conceals his brightest ray :
As night to stars, wo lustre gives to man.
The crown of manhood is a winter joy,
An evergreen, that stands the northern blast,
And blossoms in the rigour of our fate.”

2. *The sufferings of God's people ultimately contribute to their own good.*—Joseph was educated in the school of affliction, and his sufferings not only, as we have seen, contributed to his promotion, but likewise

prepared him for faithfully discharging the duties of that honourable office to which he was afterwards appointed. By having himself passed through many adverse changes of life, he was the better qualified to understand the nature of man, and to sympathise with such as are bowed down with care and sorrow. On whom could the duties of government more fitly devolve than on one who had himself experienced the evils of oppression, and yet had patiently borne them? Who more fit to take charge of human interests than he who had himself known what it was to be in want with none to minister to him, and in prison with none to visit him? Who so qualified to protect the rights of the indigent as he who had tasted with his own lips the bitter cup which oppression had mingled, and felt in all its soreness the agony of a wounded spirit? By whom could vice and immorality be so consistently rebuked as by him who, amid the most favourable occasions of dishonesty, had held fast his integrity, and, under the most urgent temptations to gratify sensual appetite, maintained his chastity by a regard to the omnipresence and authority of God?

Thus, too, it still is that the Father of Spirit leads his children through many varieties of experience to the particular sphere in which he has designed that their virtues shall attract notice and command admiration. One afflictive dispensation thus becomes, under his gracious management, propitious to the growth of excellencies that are to be illustrated under another. Adversity is made the handmaid of prosperous worth; and the lessons of patience, resignation, and industry, that were acquired in the school of suffering, are found useful after many days in the dis-

charge of duties proper to a more elevated scene. Who, for example, so well prepared to administer consolation to the afflicted as one who has known similar adversity? Who so fit to compassionate the needy, or to sympathize with the bereaved, as one who has himself had to struggle with misfortune, and from whom the loved and the dear have been unsparingly torn? Thus was even our blessed Redeemer approved to be in all things a merciful and faithful high priest. Not having where to lay his head, he is qualified to compassionate those who have none to help them. Having himself been sorely tempted, he knows how to succour them that are tempted—having himself tasted the bitterness of dying, he can tenderly feel for those on whom the pangs of death take hold. In one word, having been all his life-long acquainted with grief, he is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities :—

“In every pang that rends the heart
The man of sorrows had a part ;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.”

3. *The elevation of Joseph in the kingdom of Pharaoh is to be regarded as a type of the exaltation of Jesus to his Father's right hand.*—When the time fixed in the divine counsels came, the “word of the Lord went forth,” and the afflicted youth was lifted from his obscurity. So, too, when the period preordained of God arrived, Jesus was recalled from the obscurity of the grave, to discharge in his own person the office of a mighty governor. Joseph, having borne patiently the hardships of his lot is at length honoured by the sovereign of the land ; and Jesus,

having become obedient unto death is glorified in the sight of the universe by the King of Kings. Instead of the mean raiment which he had worn in the dungeon, there are given unto Joseph robes of splendour; and Jesus, from having a visage more marred than any man's, rises with a countenance brighter than the light, and a body all gloriously fashioned. In token of his royal approbation, Pharaoh takes his own ring from off his finger, and puts it on Joseph's hand; and, in order to give testimony to all men that Jesus is endowed with supreme power, the Father judgeth no man, but commits all judgment unto the Son. A chain of gold is put on Joseph; and on the head of Jesus there is set a crown of many stars. Joseph is made ruler over all the land of Egypt; and Jesus is constituted Head over all the creation of God. Joseph rides in the second chariot of Pharaoh; and Jesus rides forth more gloriously in the chariot of the everlasting gospel, conquering and to conquer. They cry before Joseph, Bow the knee; and all the angels of heaven are commanded to worship Jesus. This is the will of God, that unto him every knee should bow, both of things in heaven and things on earth. "Kiss ye the son, therefore, lest ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

CHAPTER EIGHTH.

THE GOOD MAN IN POWER.

" Who best
Can suffer, best can do—best reign, who first
Well hath obey'd."

A TRULY good man is always consistent with himself. He has one grand principle of action, which he carries about with him into every conceivable sphere of duty. It is his sole and undivided aim to approve himself unto Him that is invisible. This suffices to make him either contented in a mean, or humble in a high estate. The same principle that enabled Joseph to maintain his virtue in the house of Potiphar, rendered him faithful in the management of Pharaoh's kingdom. In either case, he considered that he had certain duties to perform, and that for the manner in which he discharged them he was accountable to God. The trials to which he was now exposed were indeed very different from those to which he had for a long time been accustomed. But they would have been too strong for any man whose mind was not submitted to the teaching of God's Holy Spirit. The elevation to which he was now raised was what few save himself could have stood. What with the honours that were so suddenly heaped upon him—the favour of the Prince, the applause of the people, and the gaities of the court—he was surrounded with a variety of

temptations to pride and impiety. Yet it does not appear that any of these things moved him in the slightest. The honours conferred on him he appears to have carried meekly, and the high power with which he was vested, he seems only to have rendered subservient to the great ends of justice and humanity. That he earnestly and fervently sought direction from above, no one can doubt who considers the piety by which he was all along distinguished. Knowing well that God alone could give any man a wise and understanding heart, he would, like Solomon in a subsequent age, solicit that heavenly teaching which alone could fit him to do justice and judgment. A sacred trust was committed to him, and he would desire above all things to be faithful to it. He had many sacred, yet delicate and difficult duties to perform both to the king and the people; and this consideration would render him the more importunate with Heaven, that neitherto the one nor the other might he be found wanting. As a spirit of piety had pervaded his conduct both at home with his father and in the house of Potiphar; so, now that he stood in the presence of great men, he would consider that there was one higher than the highest, to whose jurisdiction he was amenable, and on whom alone sure dependence could be placed. All the acts of his government would be regulated by a sense of his obligation to the King of Kings. He would be a diligent reformer of all existing abuses, and, at the same time, a steady upholder of praiseworthy institutions. Possessing the confidence both of his sovereign and of the nation, he would seek to bind them together by the ties of affection. It would have been an easy matter for a man of less prin-

ciple, either to infringe the just prerogatives of the crown, or to trespass upon the native rights of the people. That Joseph did neither, is abundantly evident from the respect in which he was held, alike by Pharaoh himself and the inhabitants of the land.

We have already seen how severely, on more occasions than one, he was persecuted for righteousness' sake. And now we can conceive him (having his own wrongs upon his memory) holding the reins of government with an impartial hand. He had himself known what it was to be unjustly censured—he would be slow, therefore, to receive the tale of slander. He had known what it was to be unrighteously condemned—every cause, therefore, which came before him would be searched by him to the uttermost. Taught by his own experience that the sighing of the needy was often disregarded by men in power, he would ponder, with due attention, every application for redress, and inquire after the obscure sufferers whose voices were not heard in the streets. Sensible that the highest merit is often left to languish in affliction, he would set himself to find it out, and bring it into notice. Aware, too, that those who are most ambitious of preferment are frequently the least worthy of it, he would scan with care the most arrogant pretensions, and choose, for the subordinate departments of trust, the persons who had made good their title to them rather by actions than by words. The various offices in the kingdom he would commit to the wise and faithful of the land—the patronage of government he would confer on those who had the worth to *deserve* and the modesty *not to ask it*.

We can easily conceive him, who had so intimately

known adversity, making the cause of the afflicted peculiarly his own—vindicating the cause of the oppressed, helping the man who had no earthly helper, not deeming it beneath him to visit the cottages of poverty, or even to explore the wretchedness of dungeons such as that in which he had been himself immured; taking by the hand the injured victims of power, and bestowing his gracious countenance and encouragement on the labours of honest industry. Whatever he discovered to be wrong, either in the law itself or the administration of it, he would set himself to remedy; yet would all the improvements which he introduced be gradual and temperate, rather than immediate and violent. To piety he would join discretion; to zeal, prudence. He would study the genius of the people, respect even their more innocent prejudices, and consult *time* as well as *judgment*.

The consequence of all this was, an increase of the national prosperity; for happy indeed is the people over whom a wise and righteous governor is set. "By a man of understanding and knowledge the state of a land is prolonged; and when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice." True, indeed, even in Egypt, under the government of Joseph, misery and destitution would exist. There would still be those who committed iniquity in secret, and plotted mischief upon their beds—evil doers who eluded the vigilance of the law, and spendthrifts, too, who reduced themselves to a morsel of bread by their own reckless improvidence; but through the great body of the people happiness would be diffused, the rights of industry would be secured, and its rewards made certain. As far as human legislation could go, the general good

would be provided for ; as far as human wisdom could extend, every individual in the realm would have what he was rightfully entitled to.

Would to God, that in every country under heaven such governors existed. Then, indeed, might a better state of things than ever was dreamed of by the poets of antiquity be expected to ensue. Then would the age of iron be made to give place to one of gold. But, unhappily, the selfish passions, which reign more or less in every bosom, have often unduly characterised the men whose offices and stations required that they should least of all be tainted by them. National interests have been postponed to those of faction, and the welfare of millions has been made to bend before the triumphs of political partisanship. Yet certain it is, that what has been before may be again. The political virtue of Joseph is not surely unapproachable even in what have, perhaps too truly, been characterised as degenerate times. Let but those who are called to the helm of public affairs trust, as he did, in the Lord more than in their own understandings—let them be men fearing God and hating covetousness—men who can look beyond the petty interests of partisanship, that have too long engrossed attention—men, in one word, whose hearts are solemnly impressed with a sense of moral obligation, and He, we doubt not, who is the Governor of nations will put good thoughts within them, and aid their efforts to promote a nation's welfare. Not, indeed, by dream or open vision will he now instruct them ; but in the ordinary course of his providence, and in conformity with the established laws that regulate the moral world, will he open their minds to discipline, and

manifest his own approval of the Righteousness which alone can either exalt a nation or establish a throne.

In our own land, favoured as it has long been of heaven, how many sore and crying evils might thus be remedied ! how many violent heartburnings allayed ! how many sources of discontent exhausted ! No man who chooses to open his eyes to the state of society around him will venture to affirm that talent and virtue always meet with their due rewards from those whose office it is to dispense such honours. He must be bold indeed who will deny that not a few of the highest offices, both in the Church and in the State, are held by those who could have nothing to recommend them but the arguments of birth, high connexion, or political friendship ; while others, whom it were insulting to compare with them, are, by the unfavourable circumstances of their lot, condemned to obscurity and indigence. Is it not notorious, too, that the basest means are often employed to restrain the free exercise of mind, and that the little tyrant of a few fields has it in his power to vex, annoy, or ruin the man of more comprehensive intellect than himself, who presumes to think differently on any topic of the day ? Is it not undeniable that the burden of taxation presses very unequally on the subjects of this realm, and that those often have most exacted of them who can least afford or spare it ? Is it not certain that the administration of justice is clogged with a multitude of useless forms, and that lawsuits, which might easily enough have been terminated in the course of a few months, are prolonged through a series of years, to the discomfort and anxiety, if not even to the absolute ruin, of parties involved in them ? These

things assuredly ought not so to be. We pause not to inquire by what or whose mismanagement they have been occasioned; nor do we care by whom the remedy of them shall be effected. We simply assert that the evils do beyond all controversy exist. And who, then, can doubt that the statesman, let his political designation be what it may, who shall set himself to the work of rectifying them, will wipe away a reproach from his country, earn for himself an honourable fame, and do more for the permanent welfare of a great people, than if he commanded night after night the applause of thousands by declaiming against imaginary evils, or propounding ingenious but utterly impracticable theories.

But if it be (as who can question?) the sacred duty of men in power to employ their talents to the uttermost in behalf of the people over whom they preside, it cannot surely be less the duty of the governed to yield them encouragement and support. To faction too much has already been given both by rulers and people. The watchwords of party have too long been used, and it is now much more than time to discard them. The Church and the State alike suffer from this baneful influence. The great and sacred obligations of truth are forgotten or lost sight of in the childish war of names. 'Tis curious that, after all the warnings men have had from the history of the past, they will still look more at the little points on which they differ than the great ones on which they agree. What matters it by whom the reins of Government are held in the State, if real grievances are but redressed and practical errors corrected? What avails it whether Churchmen or Dissenters be more

numerous in the land, provided only the great principles of Christian doctrine and Christian morality be universally diffused? In a State like ours especially, the minor points should bend to the weightier. The Dissenter should neither wage war against the Churchman, nor the Churchman frown unlovingly on the Dissenter. Both should unite against the common foe; if they did, God would prosper them. Surely the field of Christian labour is large enough for both. They are helps meet for each other. They are "brethren;" why should there be "strife" between them.

Let us hope and pray that the great Being, who holds in his hand the destinies of nations, may put it into the hearts of our rulers to do those things which are at once pleasing to himself and conducive to the interests of a great people; that he would incline us and every soul in these realms to give unto all their dues; that amid the shaking of all other kingdoms our country may sit unmoved; and that to children and children's children it may be told, that, relying on him and his guidance, our senators were taught wisdom even in troublous times.

CHAPTER NINTH.

JOSEPH STILL SEEMS AS ONE DEAD TO JACOB.

"There is a secret in the ways of God
With his own children, which none others know,
That sweetens all he does."

It has been deemed strange that Joseph, who was manifestly a person of amiable disposition and an affectionate nature, did not contrive means to acquaint his venerable father with his fortunes in the land of Egypt. How easy would it have been for him, especially after his advancement to honour under Pharaoh, to have found means of communicating to the good old man the history of his promotion, and thus to have soothed the anguish of a parent's grief! The thing, however, we doubt not, was of God; and it was not for Joseph to oppose even the tender affections of nature to the positive will of heaven. Had he been left to the exercise of his own judgment in the matter, he would, in all likelihood, have taken an early opportunity of relieving the solicitude which Jacob, he could not but feel, endured in his behalf. We do not suppose him to have resembled those who, when they come unexpectedly to honour, forget or are ashamed of the friends of their youth and the attachments which they once thought sacred; the sequel shows that such was not the disposition of Joseph. But the time for making such a discovery

was not yet come. The purposes of Providence demanded that, for the present, his fortunes should be unknown to his kindred. His brethren were yet to be brought unto repentance, and their unconscious introduction into his presence was to be the means of awakening it. Other important consequences, too, were dependent upon their ignorance of his success in life. Their respective characters were thus more naturally developed, and a way was likewise opened up for the subsequent preservation of their race. Had they known that the brother whom they so unmercifully misused was made ruler over all the land of Egypt, they would have trembled to face him ; and so they and their father's house might have perished for lack of bread. It was, therefore, truly a benevolent arrangement on the part of Providence, that Joseph was not at liberty to communicate to his sorrowful parent an account of his existence and prosperity. To have done so, would indeed have spared the old man much anguish of heart, and would have almost compensated for the previous misery he had endured ; but it would, at the same time, have occasioned extreme unhappiness in the family circle—have gone far to alienate entirely the affections of Jacob from his other sons, and have almost completely marred domestic enjoyment. For how could he have looked upon them any more but as characters of the worst possible description, as the dishonour of his house, and the enemies of his peace ? To have been thus for years imposed upon by the authors of this wrong ; to have sustained, too, the yet more insulting mockery of their hypocritical consolation ; to have been made the victim of their cruel dissimulation,

and yet more cruel sympathy, were circumstances enough to have awakened in his bosom the most righteous indignation. Nay, it is hard to say whether such a discovery would not have been even worse to bear than the painful conclusion to which he had already come of Joseph's accidental death. The shock, it is probable, would have been too great for him; for what evil can equal that of treachery on the part of one's "own familiar friend," and what treachery so base as that which is practised through many continuous years? And how, again, could the brethren of Joseph, have dared to look upon his awful countenance, even if only thus they might be saved from death by famine?

It was mercy, then, to conceal from his father's house the prosperity of Joseph; and it is mercy, likewise, we may reasonably conclude, that still conceals from the children of men much that curiosity is fain to know. What is truly good for us, God we may well believe, has been pleased to reveal. *More* would be injurious to our true happiness. Let us content ourselves, therefore, with that amount of information which he has thought fit to impart—believing, at the same time, that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

Were it possible for us to look through the veil of flesh into the unseen world, we should doubtless see there many things to surprise us. Some, perhaps, of whom we had entertained good thoughts, we might observe in extreme misery; while others, whose condemnation we had thought all but certain, might be seen advanced to great honour. Many of our favourite ideas and notions would, in all probability, be completely re-

versed. Our conceptions, such as they are, of the modes of spiritual being—our imaginations of heaven and hell—our indistinct apprehensions as to what constitutes the felicity of the one and the torment of the other—might undergo an amazing change. But to be completely informed on these points would not, we may rest assured, be good for us. It would leave little or no scope for the exercise of faith—it would unfit us for the business of active life, and plunge us into miseries which, as it is, we are not capable of conceiving. Over these things the veil is drawn, not only in wisdom, but in tender mercy. Enough for us that we are under the government of a great and gracious Being, who “doeth all things well,” and who, both in what he hides and what he discloses, remembers our frame. Into how many miseries would a deep insight into the futurities of our own condition on this side the grave plunge us! The certain knowledge of coming evil would overshadow with gloom every step of our pilgrimage, and we should be rendered perpetually miserable by the anticipation of a single calamity. To be absolutely assured that, on such an hour of such a day, my dearest friend should be taken from me, would mightily tend to damp the happiness which I feel in his society; his very presence would be painful to me; every utterance of his voice would be but a doleful intimation of the hour when I should hear it no more for ever. The stream of enjoyment would thus be poisoned at its fountain, and happiness itself be converted into an instrument of torture. Who could enjoy that which was but the memento of its own departure—the premonition of mourning and woe? Who that had received a definite

intimation that so many years, or months, or days had only to elapse when he must fall under the stroke of death, could prosecute with becoming steadiness of aim the labours of his secular calling, or so duly unite regard for the things of eternity with attention to the temporal welfare of those who should survive him, as to maintain in their relative position the contending claims thus asserted on his mind? It is, on the contrary, the mixture of certain and uncertain elements that contributes, under Providence, to preserve the moral nature of human actions. Were it otherwise, they would partake more of mechanical than of rational qualities. Men would act rather from physical necessity than from intelligence or choice; and the higher powers of our nature should have no scope for exercise. To some one of my readers, adversity may even now be at the door. To one that least expects the summons, the call may this very night be given, Come forth to meet the Bridegroom. But, "naming *none*, the voice speaks more authoritatively to *all*."

And as an accurate foreknowledge of calamity would not, on the whole, be good for man; so neither would the certain prescience of good. It would take away the relish of enjoyment, and spoil the pleasure which springs from sudden and only half-anticipated comfort. Hope itself would be contracted in its exercise, and its pleasures abridged. The sweetness of every mercy would be absorbed before it came; and so, both in point of diminished joy and multiplied sorrow, would we be losers by such an arrangement.

We have sometimes been charmed to witness in humble life the working of that fine philosophy which can extract honey from the bitterest herb, and "see

good in every thing." It was but lately that we chanced to see a tender-hearted mother mourning for a lovely child. The education which she had received was simple—she knew not the philosophy of the schools. "She knew, and knew no more, her Bible true." But *its* revelations had brought into lively exercise the instinctive sagacity of her nature; and we were constrained to admire and reverence the wisdom, not unaccompanied with deep emotion, which expressed itself thus—"Oh, had I known but a month beforehand that my dear boy was to be taken away from me, I believe I should have gone distracted. In all likelihood, my own grief would have hastened his end. The very strength of my affection might have destroyed him. At all events, the oftener that I looked upon his lovely face, my heart would have bled to think that I should so soon see it no more. My very rest would have been broken, and his every smile would have tortured me. But God is merciful; His way is always the best; and I can even thank him that he let me remain hopeful so long." Such, indeed, is the simple but sublime philosophy of many an unlettered man. It were well if those who have become acquainted with the refinements of education always reasoned as justly. Then should they see cause daily for adoring the wisdom, and submitting themselves to the will, of Him who,

"From *seeming* evil still educes good,
And better thence again, and better still,
In infinite progression.'

In all things let us trace his wisdom. Through life and in death let us resign ourselves to his disposal.

Assured that he always does what is right, let us trust ourselves in his keeping. Instead of seeking to be wise above what is written, let us make the pertinent use of that which he has revealed. Instead of idly speculating upon what he has not permitted us to *know*, let us set our hands and hearts diligently to what he has commanded us to *do*. Instead of wondering whether many shall be saved, let us strive and pray to be ourselves of the number. Instead of conjecturing *where* the heaven is in which just men dwell, let us try to *get there*. Instead of vainly fancying what they do, let us labour to be fitted for the employment. Let us be more anxious to avoid the torments of hell than prone to speculate upon their nature. Let us, in one word, profit by what we do know, and leave all else to Him "who maketh all things work together for good to them that love him." There are many profound mysteries which it is not yet given us to scan. But if we patiently continue in well-doing, we shall know even as now we are known. Vainly do we wish that messengers from the dead would come to tell us their modes of being and habits of enjoyment. Vainly do we wish that the veil were for a moment drawn aside. Such knowledge is as yet too high for us—

"But Time will tell us all, and Time will tell us best."

CHAPTER TENTH.

THE FIRST MEETING.

VERY wonderful are the workings of Providence—very unexpected the ends brought about by simple and ordinary means. The evils of famine are sorely felt in countries round about, but in all the land of Egypt there is bread. The plenty that abounds there is owing, under God, to the sagacity of Joseph, whom his own brethren had maliciously sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites. The information that there is corn in Egypt brings thither the inhabitants of neighbouring lands, and, among others, the ten sons of Jacob. For what will not men do to avert the horrors of starvation? Little did they suppose when they set out upon their journey that they were to stand in the presence of him whom they had once ridiculed as an idle dreamer, and bow themselves down towards the earth before one whose prophetic intimations of superiority they had long since so cruelly avenged. We know not what formed the subject of their conversation by the way, nor what their anticipations were as to the success of their errand. Probably, they had no apprehension of the result—no misgivings as to the reception which they were to meet with. They were just doing what many others had done already; and, so far as appearances were concerned, they had nothing to fear. Their business was simply a matter

of buying and selling. Their sacks being filled with corn, and the price of it being paid down, they had nothing more to do than resume their journey homeward. What was Egypt, with its governor, its people, and its customs, to them, who were separated from it by birth, manners, and religion? It is likely, therefore, that they were little, if at all, concerned about the issue. The ways of God, however, are higher than the ways of man. They are now to do the very thing which twenty years ago they laughed at as utterly incredible. They are to fulfil the very dreams which they had done so much to counteract—they are to address him as *Lord*, whom they abhorred to acknowledge as a *Brother*—yea, more, they are now to feel upon themselves the weight of blood, and be pricked to the heart for a crime which before had cost them no uneasiness.

“And Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, from the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come,” &c.—Genesis xlii. 7.

Here were now the persons who had wrought much mischief to Joseph completely in his power. He had but to signify to those about him the precise way in which he wished them to be punished, and his pleasure would be obeyed. Without entering into any explanation of his conduct, he might have commanded the darkest dungeon in the land to receive them as his

enemies. He might have denied them for days the bare necessities of life, and let them know experimentally what it was to be cast into a pit where no water could be found ; or he might have named them individually by name, and asked, with a stern countenance, whether they did not remember having dealt far more unwarrantably with their own father's son. All this, and much more than this, he might have done with impunity ; for "without him could no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." But Joseph was a person of a better spirit. Prosperity had not corrupted him, nor had even the warm sunshine of royal favour dried up the springs of natural affection in his bosom. Cruel as they had been to him, they were still *his brethren* ; and if he could but work within them a proper conviction of their guilt, and get them to adore the superintending providence of God, he would find to himself greater satisfaction than in the "wild justice of revenge." He accordingly makes himself strange to them—questions them minutely as to their connections and descent—charges them with designs against the government, and appears to entertain great doubts of the story which they told. We shall not attempt to vindicate Joseph, in the present instance, from the charge of affectation. We know that the slightest transgression of truth is unjustifiable upon any grounds of temporary expediency ; and Joseph, we have no doubt, saw enough in the behaviour of his brethren to convince him that they were not justly chargeable with that which he imputed to them. But surely that person must be indeed ill-read in the book of the human heart who cannot pardon the infirmity, or even acknowledge that

it "leaned to virtue's side." Who shall assert that the behaviour of Joseph on this occasion was not in exact harmony with the experience of us all : fond, as we are at times, to subdue our own emotions, and awaken those of the friends or acquaintances with whom for long we have ceased to hold intercourse ? We maintain not that the thing was unexceptionably *right*—we assert only that it was positively *natural* ; and in support of our position we could appeal to the experience of the returning soldier, who has for a long series of years been separated from the *endearments* of home, but yet has hoped, even against hope, that he still occupies a place in its *sympathies*. He comes—but, oh ! how changed !—to the sweet valley in which his childhood was reared. He is all impatience to gain the door that had so often in bygone years opened at his call ; but yet he lingers by the way, and inquires at all who can give him information, whether there still dwells in such a place the mother that smiled upon his infancy, or the gentle sister whose remembered tenderness had often affected him to tears in troubles where he had none to soothe him. Assured of their existence and welfare, he goes on ; but, ere he reaches the dwelling, he determines to assume the appearance of a stranger. *Not all at once* does he reveal himself to those whom his heart has burned within him to embrace. The tale of other days is told ; the delicate allusion is made to scenes and incidents which love and affection never forget ; he watches their countenances to see whether no symptom of recognition yet be visible ; wonders who shall be the first within the family band to discover in him the dear friend of former years ; aims at awakening some chord within

their bosoms that shall give back a tone of tenderness—and their interest, if not their conjectures, being awakened, throws himself upon their necks to weep. Who that has ever witnessed the subsequent joy can frown upon the little artifice by which, for a short while, the stream of gladness was restrained, that it might afterwards bound forth in a full flood of rapture? To the stern moralist, then, who can make no allowance for the little affectation which Joseph exercised, we would say, spare or suspend your censure until you have at least read a few leaves more of human feeling and experience. It is *nature* that prompts the concealment—*nature* that forbids the veil to be too rashly drawn aside. Let, then, HUMANITY sympathize with the frailty, for NATURE's sake.

Enough is recorded in the sacred history to satisfy us that the piety of Joseph was brought into exercise on this occasion. He remembered, it is said, the dreams which he had dreamed of them. Could he do so without admiring and adoring the hand of Providence? No—he would recognise in all this the superintending direction of that God who had first of all given him intimations of honour, and then made use of his brethren's malignity to bring those intimations to pass. And when he bethought himself of the indignant reception which the repetition of his dreams met with, the derision and the scorn with which he had been assailed, the discouragement which even Jacob himself had shown to the expectations which he cherished, the pit having no water into which he was so unmercifully thrown, the sale of his person to the Ishmaelites, the dungeon in Egypt into which he was subsequently cast, the strange "concurrence of

events" that had terminated in his promotion, he must have felt as he had never done before, that the purposes of the Almighty could not be thwarted by the cross machinations of men. Here was enough to call forth wonder, adoration, gratitude, and confidence. In remembering his dreams he remembered God by whose inspiration they were given. In remembering his dreams he remembered his affliction. In remembering his dreams he remembered the faithfulness of the Most High.

It were well if we, to whom God has spoken, not by dreams or midnight visions, but by the written oracles of his word, did so treasure up sacred truth in our hearts. The passages which we have learned in childhood should be made use of by us in after years, both for the governance of our conduct, and the strengthening of our belief in the Divine promises or threatenings. When at any time we observe wicked men cut off in the midst of their days, unjust men loaded with shame, liars visited with scorn, licentious men falling victims of premature old age, or proud oppressors reduced after a course of violence to degradation and contempt, we ought to regard the event not merely as a natural consequence of the sin which preceded it, but as the positive fulfilment of the written sentence which has gone forth against iniquity. When, on the contrary, we behold the righteous man respected as more excellent than his neighbour, the faithful man trusted above all his fellows, and honoured in the gate among the elder of the land, the merciful man blessed by the needy that were ready to perish, the temperate man a stranger to many of the diseases which break down the constitution of the profligate,

and the man of persevering industry rewarded with competency or independence, we ought to connect such circumstances, not only with the order which God has established in the world, but with the express intimations which he has given, that "it shall be well with them that fear him." Our own experience, and the experience of others, might thus be rendered so many instruments of piety—so many commentaries upon the lessons of Scripture. But, if we give no diligent heed to the written word, it will avail us but little to have possessed its treasures. Ours will be the description of the fool who, though many a price be put into his hands to get wisdom, hath no heart thereto.

We may observe, too, that even as Joseph dealt out apparently a measure of severity to his brethren, while yet his purposes were kind, so God sometimes hides his face from his people, not in anger, but in mercy. Thus did our Blessed Redeemer to the woman of Canaan. She cried unto him saying, "Lord have mercy on me, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But he answered her not a word. Still she cries, and even his disciples, in order to get rid of her, make supplication in her behalf; but he answers, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She even falls down before him, saying, "Lord help me;" but even yet he vouchsafes not to answer her request—yea, he even reminds her of her humiliating descent: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." But are his purposes, therefore, unmerciful? No; thus he proves her faith; and the confession being made, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from

their master's table," her daughter is made whole, and she herself commended. So is it still. Not always is prayer *immediately* answered. There is sometimes not a little to vex and darken the penitent soul. But let no man, therefore, despair. Let no man even doubt or refrain from supplication. Rather let him reiterate his wants with greater fervency than before, and ere long he shall behold God as the rock of his strength and the health of his countenance. The cloud which had once seemed to be charged with thunder shall fall upon him in showers of mercy, and he will gratefully own that it is good for a man to hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

The worst, however, is not yet passed with them. They are not only *accused* of being spies, but are dealt with as such. Notwithstanding their repeated protestations, Joseph insists upon his point, and demands that their youngest brother, of whom they had spoken, be brought down in testimony of their innocence. They are all, in the meantime, put in ward together; and on the third day thereafter he proposes to them a plan by which they should make good their profession. "If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison; go ye carry corn for the famine of your houses; but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die." To these terms they readily conceded, encouraged, no doubt, by the assurance which the governor of the land made unto them in the words—I FEAR GOD. Yet, after all, was there not a terrible reproof to them contained in these words? Had *they feared God*, Joseph could not have suffered what he did at their hand. Had they

feared God, they would have spared *him* much misery, and their common father great anguish of heart. Not so in former years would they have derided him for his dreams; not so would they have conspired together to slay him; not so would they have stripped him of his garment and sat down to eat bread while he was ready to die with hunger; not so would they have invented a falsehood to their father, and with hypocritical sympathy pretended to comfort him. No words could be more heavy with rebuke to them than these, had they considered them aright. They ought at once to have taken shame to themselves from the announcement, and considered how shocking was the contrast which their own conduct presented to this. And so, likewise, should it be with every man who witnesses in his neighbour a conscientious regard to those rules of moral obligation which he may himself have been in the habit of violating. Ungodly sinner, did you ever observe a little child upon its knees, lisping the prayer which affection had taught it to utter? irreligious parent, did you ever hear the voice of psalms rise from a neighbour's dwelling? sabbath-breaker, did you notice, at any time, the multitude moving devoutly to the sanctuary of God? then might you have reasonably read, in the doings of such, a pointed condemnation of your own impiety. Their conduct was a solemn testimony against yours; and a day is hastening on when you shall indeed painfully feel it to have been such. May the thought of it now induce seriousness! May the consideration move you, in time, *to fear God!*

CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

A PENITENT REFLECTION.

**"If man sleeps on, untaught by what he sees,
Can he prove infidel to what he feels?"**

The experiment which Joseph tried upon his brethren was not unsuccessful. The temporary adversity under which they were unexpectedly pressed was the means of awakening within their bosoms convictions that had long been dormant. As we read :—

"They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this evil come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child ? and ye would not hear ; therefore, behold, also his blood is required." —Genesis xlii. 21.

"Human nature is the same in all ages." The brethren of Joseph were now conscience-stricken for a sin which appears to have cost them no uneasiness for twenty years ; just as bad men, in these times, are often roused to a sense of misdeeds long since committed, by the occurrence of some sudden or unexpected calamity. The very men who had remorselessly perpetrated an unnatural crime against their unoffending brother ; who had heard his heart-piercing cries without emotion ; who had overcome every

tender and melting remonstrance ; who had, without so much as a sigh of contrition, given him over to the tender mercy of the stranger ; who had endured to hear, unmoved, the bitter lamentation of a venerable parent for the heavy loss which they had caused him to incur—these very men, who, one should think, were well nigh dead to every compunctious feeling, are at length powerfully wrought upon, in an unlooked for hour, and in a strange land, with conviction of sin. They are carried back, through a long course of events, to the very moment of time when they conceived the horrid idea of shedding innocent blood. They imagine that they see Joseph in all his affliction before them ; that they hear the beseeching tones of his voice ; that they behold the countenance yet more eloquent than words which implored them to show mercy, but in vain. That black deed, committed by them twenty years ago, is now fresh in their memories as a thing of yesterday ; and it now seems that, because of it, this evil is come upon them.

1. *From this portion of the sacred narrative we are taught, first of all, the mighty power of conscience.*—Its legitimate authority may, for a long time, be set at nought ; its native alarms may be hushed by a variety of expedients ; by the repeated appliances of worldly considerations its edge may be entirely worn off ; but there still exists within it a capacity of being excited, and sooner or later its powers must be asserted. You may as well think to remove the sun out of the firmament as to overthrow for ever the supremacy of conscience. True, indeed, you may so manage matters as to question for a while its very existence as an original principle of our nature, just

as the maniac may imagine that he possesses within himself the power to turn into darkness the orb of day. In the exercise of this wild fancy he may command the light of nature to be quenched, and, shutting himself up in a darksome cell, he may flatter himself into the notion that his mandate has been obeyed ; but let reason assert its power, and he will own his folly ; when brought forth to the presence of day, he will wonder at the mad delusion which possessed him, and be once more convinced that not by human might or power can the laws of nature be reversed. The sinner, too, who has for years laboured under a similar hallucination, may even go so far as to raise the laugh of profane mockery against the doctrine of human accountability ; but let destruction overtake him like a whirlwind ; let the reason that is in him once more have fair play, and by his fears, his remembrances, and his expectations, even *he* will give awful testimony to the truth which he derided.

“ Conscience alone will do the work of hell.”

A remarkable instance of this sort we have in Herod, who, upon hearing of Christ's miracles, said—“ This is John the Baptist whom I beheaded ; he is risen from the dead ; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.” Than this fancy of his nothing could be wilder or more unlikely ; yet one consideration there was which had originally suggested it, and at length shut out almost all arguments to the contrary. Conscience was roused, and the fears of guilt were awakened. With a view to please an adulterous woman, he had lately put to death that righteous per-

son ; and now it seemed as if his blood cried from the earth for vengeance. The very tidings which gladden the hearts of hundreds in the land are as daggers to his soul. The fabric which he had daubed with untempered mortar falls at once into ruin before the report that a great prophet has appeared, and he, who but a day before had dismissed from his bosom the fear of retribution, exclaims, in an agony of alarm—"This is John whom I beheaded." Ahab, in like manner, following the counsel of a woman yet more worthless than himself, gets possession of Naboth's vineyard. Its rightful owner is falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, and cruelly put to death. The king goes down to the inheritance of the murdered man, and imagines that he has nothing more to do than enjoy it in peace. He bids care and remorse be gone—anticipates high satisfaction from the field so unrighteously acquired, and sees nothing before him but undisturbed enjoyment. Elijah, the prophet, however, faces him unexpectedly there. The king's countenance changes, and his heart fails him for fear. The ghost of the murdered man seems to stand before him, and to the prophet, whose presence called it up, he can but stammer forth the bitter exclamation, "Hast thou found me, O ! mine enemy." And thus, too, the brethren of Joseph are, by the unlooked for adversity which befel them, brought to a quick and painful consciousness of bygone sin. True, indeed, they were innocent of the *political* crime with which the governor of the land charged them ;—as far as *that* was concerned, they suffered without cause. But there was another crime, far worse and more highly aggravated, for which

they now felt they deserved to suffer. Their sin had now at length found them out, and it could not be complained of that, as they had formerly plotted mischief against the innocent, they should, though clear in the matter at present imputed to them, be dealt with by the governor as offenders. How could *they* now appeal with boldness either to Justice or to Mercy, who had on that memorable occasion shown themselves so inaccessible to the demands of both? What wonder that a *stranger* treated them so sternly, when they, to their own *brother*, had proved so heartless? That man who now spake so roughly to them might have peculiar reasons of his own for entertaining suspicion of them; reasons which, though quite unsatisfactory, might yet be natural enough. But it had not been so with them in the day of Joseph's calamity. They knew well his meek and amiable nature; they had no shadow of reason to distrust him; they had, on the contrary, every conceivable reason to respect his candour and love his simplicity of heart. Though guiltless, therefore, of bad designs against the governor of Egypt, they had been "verily guilty" of a far more atrocious offence, and it seemed as if the day of retribution were now come.

Let not the sinner seek to flatter himself into the persuasion that this is an extraordinary case. To every deliberate transgressor of his laws, the Almighty hath said, Be sure your sin shall find you out. A man may indeed bribe conscience to a temporary quiet; but this will not always do; sooner or later it will awake for vengeance, and give him practically to understand that there can be no solid peace to the wicked. Has he wronged his neighbour, and at length forgotten the

injustice? In the day of his own adversity, conscience will suggest to him, as to Joseph's brethren, that he has been "*verily* guilty." Has he, by following the counsel that caused to err, turned the joy of his mother into bitterness, or brought down the grey hairs of a religious father with sorrow to the grave? The conviction will disturb his midnight slumbers in an hour when he thinketh not; and, when called upon to follow them to the house appointed for all living, will it be as if a voice issued from the tomb, saying, Hast thou not hurried us hither? Has he seduced a fellow-creature from the paths of virtue to those of immorality and shame; and, after many a long year, has the base deed almost escaped the memory of the neighbourhood where he dwells? yet will his own dying bed be rendered uneasy with the remembrance, and it will be as if he heard the Judge standing by the side of it, saying, Now must the blood of that ruined maiden be demanded at thy hands. Has he lived in the habitual neglect of God's worship, and, in the face of solemn warnings, cast off all serious apprehensions? yet will the days of sickness come, and with them an accusing angel to remind him of opportunities lost, of talents abused, and of counsel set at nought. Truly, as Bishop Hall has observed, "nothing doth so powerfully call home the conscience as affliction, neither doth there need any other art of memory for sin besides misery." It is well for men when their convictions of guilt, thus awakened by adversity, terminate in the repentance which needeth not to be repented of, and not in that sorrow of the world which worketh death.

But alas! how often is it otherwise! How often

is the subsequent behaviour of those who, for a while, have been seriously affected, an awful commentary upon the statement of scripture, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ! You shall see men in the world whose self-complacency frequently goes and comes. The last agonies of a neighbour's death-bed do sometimes, when they stand by, awaken within their minds a presentiment of their own mortality, and, when they assemble to convey him to his long home, and witness at his grave the execution of the universal sentence, Dust to dust, they do, for a moment feel themselves interested in the solemnities of death, and cannot help the conviction that ere long, other men shall assemble round their own graves, and, the last offices being performed, leave them to silence and forgetfulness, even as they themselves are about to go to their business and their homes. When the tale of some sudden calamity is told them in reference to others whom they have intimately known, they are made for a moment to apprehend as if there were but a step between themselves and death ; or, when they sit under a moving sermon upon righteousness and judgment to come, like Felix, they for an instant tremble and acknowledge it to be an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. These solemnities of feeling do often, nevertheless, disappear with the occasions that excited them, and no more influence the ordinary affections of the heart than the fall of a leaf into the stream can alter or suspend the course of its waters. How frequently, too, in the sick chamber have we seen men determining that if their days should be prolonged, they would spend them after another fashion—crying mightily

unto God that he would spare them to recover strength—and calling the beds on which they lay to witness that if he did, they would never be unmindful of his mercy ! And yet did not their resolutions wax fainter as their frame grew stronger, and, turning in a great measure to their old ways, did they not forget alike the dispensation which awoke their fears and the obligations to amendment with which they bound themselves ? Alas ! the gourd, which grows up one night and perishes the next, is but too faint an emblem of of the heart's fickleness. The meteor that flashes through the midnight sky is scarce more evanescent than the resolutions and purposes of man.

It should be remembered, however, that if serious convictions are let slip, it would have been better never to have felt them. It was not an alleviation, but an aggravation of the guilt of Felix, for example, that he once felt upon his spirit the power of a world to come. Better would it have been for him that he had never heard the great apostle of righteousness, and never been impressed to terror with his statements, than *having heard*, and *having been impressed*, to harden his heart again in the wickedness which he, for an instant, felt to be so perilous. Thus it would have been with Joseph's brethren, had they gone their way without cherishing the convictions awakened in their bosoms. Better that they had never experienced them at all, if they had proved only like the morning cloud and the early dew ;—and so, too, reader, will it be with you, if, instead of keeping alive your apprehensions of danger till they terminate, with God's grace, in thorough reformation, you allow them to disappear with the reason that excited them. Be it

yours then to pray with becoming earnestness for the influences of the blessed Spirit that alone can deepen impressions of seriousness; and so you shall, in due time, feel the blessedness of those who, having sown in tears, reap in joy. Your fears shall be succeeded by peace and consolation in the Holy Ghost; even as the tempests and whirlwinds of nature make way for the approach of spring, and as the showers that gladden the earth are ushered in by the bursting of thunder.

2. *May we not hence infer how terrible will be the conviction of sin in the impenitent at the judgment day?*—The memory of guilt is indelible: it is a part of us, and we may as soon think to annihilate the soul itself as that which has become identified with it. We must go hence, and we can take nothing with us but our own consciences. We shall carry with us into the invisible world the remembrance of things which we ought to have done, but did not; and of things which we ought not to have done, yet did. Is this, then, a light or unimportant matter? Let me here appeal to the past experience of the reader. You have sometimes felt, no doubt, what an awful thing it is to bear for one single night the agonies of a troubled mind for *one* wrong action. Think then what it will be to become sensible of all the sins which you committed in the course of a whole lifetime, and to go into the unseen world with the burden of them upon your awakened memory. You know what it is to wish, but wish in vain, any one deed undone; you may have felt that you would readily give all the substance of your house to call back one rashly spoken word, or to get blotted out from the book of remembrance one

foolish deed; and it added in such a case very much to the sharpness of your grief, that what was *done*, could not be *undone*—that what had been spoken, could not be unsaid—that what had happened, could not be reversed. Can you not then frame some idea, however inadequate, of the torment which you must feel, if you should pass impenitent into the presence of your Judge, with the conscience awakened to a sense of all the sins you ever committed; with the mind quickened to behold with a glance the whole series of your misdeeds; with *the power of association* so painfully improved as to suggest, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye, one after another of your multiplied transgressions? Can you bear the thought of lying thus for ever under the intolerable burden of your own guilt? If not, now while there is an opportunity of escaping from this misery, acquaint yourself with God and be at peace. The blood of Jesus can wash away the deepest and darkest stains which adhere to you. Make, then, immediate application to it. Distrust not its efficacy—doubt not its freeness. Being washed in it, your sins which were red as scarlet, shall be made white as snow; your iniquities shall be remembered no more; you shall know the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered; and when the impenitent are at the last overwhelmed with shame, you, having obtained peace through the blood of atonement, shall lift up the head without spot or fear; yea, throughout eternal ages you shall rejoice in Him, your Elder Brother, who redeemed the “guilty” by his blood.

3. *We may hence see that in the time of calamity it is a great matter to have a clear conscience.*—This was a consolation to Reuben on the present occasion.

He had interceded with his brethren in Joseph's behalf, saying unto them, Do not sin against the child. Although he was now, therefore, involved with them in a common calamity, his heart did not reproach him like theirs. Good men may sometimes be brought to suffer with the wicked, but they have that about them which contributes to their support. The testimony of a good conscience is, in such circumstances, better than all riches. "It is the want," says Barrow, "of the best pleasure, that both renders the absence of all other pleasures grievous, and their presence insipid. Had we a good conscience, we could not seem to want comfort ; as we could not truly be unhappy, so we could hardly be discontented. It is an evil conscience that giveth an edge to all other evils, and enableth them sorely to afflict us, which otherwise would but slightly touch us ; we become thence incapable of comfort, seeing not only things here on earth to cross us, but heaven to lower us ; finding no visible succour, and having no hope from the power invisible ; yea, having reason to be discouraged with the fear of God's displeasure." "All the trouble," says Leighton, "that befalls the innocent, is but as the rattling of hail upon the tiles of the house to a man that is sitting at a banquet within a warm room." Whatever shall be the evils visited upon the societies of men that we are connected with, it will be a comfort to us, even when made to suffer with them, that in our proper place we testified against the sins which brought on the judgment. Let us, then, ever seek to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men. In prosperity and in adversity alike, we should then have a continual feast. For better it is even to suffer,

being innocent, than to share in the prosperity of the wicked. To have protested against a wrong decision which we had not the power to prevent ; to have taken an honourable though unavailing exception against the unjust findings of a "tyrant majority," will bring comfort to a man when an undistinguishing calamity falls, as sometimes it may, upon the good and the bad alike. The misery of Reuben was alleviated by the consideration that he had not only himself had no hand in the sale of Joseph, but had interceded, though in vain, in his behalf.

Simeon, in the meantime, who, it is likely, had been the chief agent in that evil deed ; who perhaps had suggested the murderous scheme ; who had been most unmerciful in his treatment of Joseph, and least inclined to ponder the arguments of Reuben, is bound before them. The rest are dismissed, with an intimation on the part of the governor, that unless they shall bring down to Egypt their youngest brother, they need neither expect to be dealt with as honest men, nor to recover the hostage now left behind. Their money, too, is restored ! as they stop by the way, the discovery is made by one of them that such is the case ; they are more and more astonished ; they begin to fear the worst ; and, in the utmost perplexity of heart, they ask, What is this that God hath done to us ? Conscience is now thoroughly alarmed, and it seems as if, by multiplied tokens of evil, they were taught that perdition was at hand. On reaching home, they relate to their father the marvellous narrative, concealing, no doubt, the allusions made by them to the affair of Joseph's sale. Each sack being opened, the money is found in the mouth of it. How to explain it they cannot tell. The old

man shares in their fear ; and, in the heartfelt anguish of a parent unexpectedly bereaved of one son, and apprehensive of losing another, he exclaims, " Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." In vain do they attempt to console him. In vain does Reuben offer his own children in Benjamin's stead ; for what advantage could Jacob gain by so extravagant a substitution ? The proposal is one which Nature cannot accept of ; and so, pressing as are the calls of famine, and urgent as is the plea for Simeon's liberation, he persists in his determination to keep Benjamin at home. " My son," he said, " shall not go down with you ; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

CHAPTER TWELFTH.

A MISTAKE.

"All these things are against me."—*Genesis* xlii. 36

So thought Jacob when informed of Simeon's imprisonment, and given to understand that nothing but the parting with Benjamin could effect his liberation. What with Joseph's loss, Simeon's detention in Egypt, and the likelihood, as to him it seemed, of Benjamin's removal, he found himself in deep distress, and hastily concluded that there was some design in Providence to work out the ruin of his house ; but in this he was mistaken. All these things were intended for his good, and turned out so in the end. The sale of Joseph (a matter as yet unknown to him) was so managed by Divine Providence as to save himself and many others alive in time of dearth. The detention of Simeon was the means (who can doubt it?) of bringing that once unmerciful youth to repentance for his cruelty ; and this was better for himself and Jacob too in the end, than if he had been dismissed with the rest of his brethren, to lead a life of thoughtlessness, or to feel the anguish of remorse only when it might be too late to profit by it. The removal of Benjamin, likewise, for a season from his presence was to be, though he knew it not, the occasion of his being again restored to that beloved child whose supposed death he had

lamented so passionately and mourned so long. Ignorance of the Divine purposes blinded his judgment to the true merits of the case before him ; and so, although every circumstance was contributing to his future good, he, with a natural, perhaps, but certainly unjustifiable peevishness, exclaimed, " All these things are against me."

A little more reflection might have taught the Patriarch that the behaviour of the Egyptian Governor was not altogether so inexplicable as he had at first imagined. Egypt, he might have considered, was chiefly liable to invasion from that quarter whence his sons pretended to have come. It had already, if history can be depended on, suffered much from a colony of shepherds, who, not without great difficulty were at length expelled from it ; and, as all the neighbouring countries were now oppressed with famine, while it alone was in the enjoyment of plenty, there was much, he might have considered, to awaken the Governor's suspicions. The confinement of Simeon, therefore, might, for aught he knew to the contrary, be expedient on political grounds. At all events, it was premature to pronounce positively as yet upon the issue. Jacob's fears, however, got the better, in the meantime, of all such considerations. Who can wonder at it ? or who that knows what a parent's heart is can fail to discern in this, the excess of his passion, the workings of a kind and amiable nature ?

The mistake into which Jacob fell is far from being a rare one among the children of God. One affliction after another befalls them ; one wound being healed, a second is inflicted ; one painful bereavement is succeeded by another, it may be, yet more severe.

The clouds return again after the rain, and life is almost a succession of sorrows. In such painful circumstances their minds are perplexed within them, and, like the Patriarch of old, they exclaim, "All these things are against us." Yet are the very calamities which they deplore working out, although they know it not, their real good. The time, too, will come when they themselves shall be made to see and acknowledge this. How often have aged saints, on looking back over all the way by which the Lord their God led them, seen cause to rejoice on those very events and circumstances which at one time they thought almost too much for them to bear. And surely, if it is so even upon this side of heaven, we may reasonably suppose that it will be much more so there, inasmuch as a deeper insight shall be gained into the plans and purposes of Providence; more accurate conceptions formed of what is fit and right; more comprehensiveness of judgment to embrace the schemes of mercy and perfect willingness of heart to acquiesce in them. Then shall all mists of error and prejudice be dispelled; the authority of Truth shall be paramount; and the once-bewildered intellect shall repose undoubtingly on the bosom of Infinite Mercy. It will then appear to every happy soul that the methods taken were precisely those which best corresponded with its nature; that the discipline which it most complained of was that for which it had greatest reason to be thankful; and that the heaviest strokes which fell upon it were but designed to mould it into such a form of beauty as might harmonise with the glorious building of which it is a part. Here, because good men know only in part, they say "All these

things are against us." Then, because that which is in part is done away, they readily and cheerfully acknowledge, "All was well and wisely ordained." One tear or pang the less would have taken from the fullness of their joy. It is seen, and thankfully owned, that to have been spared any particular trial of which they complained would not have been truly desirable, and the statement of the inspired apostle is fully understood that "The light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out a great and eternal weight of glory."

Complain not, then, ye children of God, that now ye are in heaviness through manifold tribulations. Say not that the darkest passages of your history are either significant of the divine displeasure, or that they shall ultimately be disadvantageous to yourselves. It may be distressing enough to see your fairest prospects blighted, and your dearest attachments broken ; but even then God has better things in store for you, and, if you but wait patiently, he will bring them to pass. "It is against us," you say, when your riches take to themselves wings and flee from you as an eagle towards heaven. Not so, however, if thus your hearts are disengaged from things precarious in their nature, and you are more disposed in consequence to prize the treasures which moth cannot corrupt nor thieves destroy. "It is against us," you say, when the friend on whom you had depended proves faithless to his promises, and abandons you when you most need his aid. Not so, however, if thus you were taught the useful lesson of withdrawing your confidence from man and placing it in God, whose promises are exceeding precious. Better, surely, that

you should be undeceived in time, than that you should go down to the grave with a lie on the right hand. Better that you should know how frail the reed of Egypt is while you are yet in the land of peace, than that it should go into your hands and pierce them only when you pass through the swellings of Jordan, and no physician is in view to heal the wound. "It is against us," you say, when you are left to languish for months or years in the confinement of a sick chamber, shut out from the pleasures of active life, and prevented from following the labours of your calling. Not so, however, if thus you are made more capable of sympathising with the griefs and pains of others, if you are brought to meditate more seriously than you did in days of health upon the great end of your being, and if the sickness of the body is rendered instrumental in working out the recovery of the soul. "It is against us," you say, when one tie after another that you deemed sacred is broken by the hand of death, when the desire of your eyes is taken from you, and the little ones whom you held so dear are made to fall like flowers before the nipping blast. Not so, however, if thereby you are drawn closer to your God and Saviour; if thus your heart is dispossessed of its idols, and you are induced to think more of that heaven in which the buds of promise, that were blasted here, shall revive to bloom eternally. No, verily, if you are the children of God, all these things are *for you*. The discipline may be harsh, but it is salutary. The draught may be bitter, but the taking of it is health. But a little while and you shall be made to acknowledge that in righteousness, in faithfulness, and in mercy, the Lord thus dealt

with you. Be it yours, in the meantime, to trust every thing that concerns you to Him whose ways are past finding out, and to say with meek submission—"Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

Affliction, in truth, is but the school in which good men are trained for heaven. The lesson which they have to learn is submission to the Divine Will. Some of them acquire the habit in a shorter time than others. Some dispositions are more, others less, obstinate; but all of them must be brought in captivity to Christ, before they can be pronounced meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. In proportion to the resistance that is to be overcome must be the force applied. Gentler remedies being found ineffectual, harsher ones must be resorted to. But if the improvement of the moral nature be the effect, is there not cause for thanksgiving? How often may you meet with men in the world who, though in their school-boy days they disliked what they considered the stern severity of their instructor, complained of the laborious exercises which he insisted upon their performing, and could not understand to what purpose was all that waste of study which he exacted from them, frankly acknowledged the utility of the discipline which they felt to be so irksome, and now that they have experienced its fitness for enabling them to attain eminence in public life, bless the memory of the person whose zeal for their welfare they could not then appreciate, but whose apparent rigour they now find was but mercy in disguise! And even thus shall it be with the saints of God when they join the society of just men made perfect. The character being then thoroughly formed, they shall see that more than

a teacher does for his pupils God had been doing for them, that the severest exercises of trial were but preparatory for the excellence which he delights in ; that every tear which they shed, and every sigh which they heaved on earth, were but the necessary means of their advancement to glory and to virtue ; that every loss which they sustained, and every bereavement which they deplored, were but important parts in that great system of moral education which has at length terminated in the perfection and happiness of their nature. The connexion between things immediate and things remote being laid open to them, they shall see that not one of their heaviest griefs could well have been dispensed with. "All afflictions in the world, with which God doth exercise his people, are like mournful notes in music, which make the melody of the tune more pleasant, and set off those sweeter airs which follow upon them. Troubles here cause the joys of heaven to appear more glorious in the eyes of glorified saints."* There is not more of poetry than of truth in the observation of Cowper—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

We may here remark, too, that it argues much for the mercy and forbearance of God that he overlooks our erroneous misconstructions of his plans. When Jacob thus gave way to a consideration of distrustfulness, He did not shut up the bowels of his compassion against him, nor abandon him to the resolution which, in a moment of peevishness, he had formed. Had his

* Charnock.

ways been like the ways of men, he would have done so. But, instead of this, he arranges matters so, that, without violence being done to the patriarch's moral nature, his assent is obtained. The famine still presses, his children remonstrate, the necessity of the case is pondered by him, and Benjamin is allowed to go down into Egypt that the things which Jacob thought so much against him may be seen to be truly advantageous to him. How often has God thus borne with our perverse misapprehension! In spite of our murmurings and discontent which an *earthly* superior would not have tolerated, he has calmly pursued his own way, and dealt with us graciously. Although by reason of our ungodly jealousies and querulous provocations, he might have cast us off utterly, he has blessed us still. "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust." How often did he thus bear with the Israelites in the wilderness, who, though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, yet believed not in his power, and trusted not in his salvation. "Being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again." How often had our blessed Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, thus to bear with the slowness of his disciples' understanding. "Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known me, Thomas?" "Oh! fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "It is not for you to know the

times and the seasons which the Father has put in his own power."

Let this consideration, then, incline us to bear patiently with those of our fellow-creatures who misconstrue *our* actions, or misinterpret our motives; remembering that if God had been extreme to mark our erroneous views of his character and government, we should long ere now have been cut down as cumberers of the ground. Let us extend to those who do us wrong our compassion and sympathy. Perhaps the injury which they do us is unintentional on their part. It may be that they have come to a false conclusion in regard to us, merely because they are not aware of certain other facts which would have gone far to modify their judgment. If so, in condemning them, we should just ourselves be doing what we censure them for. Or, perhaps the misconstruction is wilful, occasioned by a groundless dislike of ourselves and our connections. Be it so; but have *we* not frequently thus offended against God, and been favoured by him notwithstanding! Erroneous as *their* views may be, they are yet reasonable as compared with *ours*. For they question but the virtue of sinful and unperfect beings, whereas we have arraigned the wisdom and goodness of the Holy and Just One. As we expect therefore forbearance to be extended to us by our Father which is in heaven, let us show it to our brethren upon earth. Let us be merciful to other men's infirmities, and severe only to our own. How, let us ask ourselves, are we to take it amiss that the most injurious assertions are cast upon our integrity, when we have ourselves, times without number, if not in word, at least in spirit and in principle, declared that,

if our own fortunes were in our own hands, our happiness should have been less interrupted? What is this but to doubt the right of God to govern the world which he has made, to dispute the equity of his arrangements, to assume to ourselves the attributes of wisdom and omniscience? Let us labour, then, to bring our minds and hearts more under the influence of the wisdom that cometh down from above. So in the misconstructions that other men put upon our conduct or its motives we shall find much which, if it may not admit of justification, is at least entitled to our charitable forgiveness. And so, too, in the gloomiest dispensations of Providence, we shall be inclined to trust where we cannot explain; to confide in a Father's mercy where we find it hard to conjecture his purposes. So, in one word, we shall pass through life's changeful scenes, *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*.

“The God, who knew what human hearts would prove—
How slow to learn the dictates of his love,
That, hard by nature, and of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still,
In pity to the sinners he designed
To rescue from the ruins of mankind;
Called for a cloud to darken all their years,
And said, Go spend them in the vale of tears.”

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

THE SECOND MEETING.

It is lamentable to think that, while the bodily wants of men are promptly attended to by them, their spiritual necessities are in comparison little felt or provided against. They will do much and dare much to ward off temporal adversity ; they will scarce bestir themselves to escape the damnation of hell. No persuasion is needed to set them upon the use of means by which the horrors of starvation may be averted ; the strongest arguments and representations of eloquence avail not to move them to provide against the ruin of their perishing souls. How can this be accounted for but upon the Scriptural principle, that "the imagination of man's thoughts is evil continually?" See with what earnestness the hungry man solicits for himself the meat that perisheth ; contrast with it the indifference which the spiritually destitute manifests for the bread of life. The one is importunate and persevering in his efforts to obtain what his nature craves ; the other, even when you press heavenly manna upon his acceptance, can with difficulty be brought to acknowledge it as a favour. Is it not sad to think that while the cry for bread is so loudly and affectingly raised, the desire of spiritual nourishment is so faintly expressed and so inadequately felt ; that, while to save themselves from the evils of

famine, men will readily part with all that they possess, they are contented to perish for lack of religious knowledge? Yet thus it is, and thus it must be, until the spirit of grace shall thoroughly awaken men to the value of that which is immortal. Then, and not before, will they act upon the principle that, as the life is more than meat, the soul is more precious than the body. Then only will they come to esteem the words of truth more precious than their necessary food.

What a rebuke is conveyed to the spiritually destitute in the anxiety manifested by Jacob to obtain corn for his household! The famine is sore in the land, and again does he call upon his children to go down into Egypt to buy for themselves a little food. Even although Simeon had for some time been detained there, and no tidings came to Canaan of his fate, again will he have them to make trial of that governor whom they had found so stern. His children remonstrate with him as to the necessity of his allowing Benjamin to accompany them. And when at length the old man finds that nothing else will do to save them from the misery of starvation, he consents to let the lad, in whose life his own was bound up, go down with them into that country from which, it was possible, he might never return. The urgency of the case was such as to overcome his tender reluctances. And so, rather than see his household die for lack of bread, he agrees to let the *child of his old age, the brother of Joseph, the sole surviving son* (as to him it seemed) *of Rachel*, accompany the others into a land which already held in captivity one member of his family. Who can think of this without remarking how it cries shame upon the carelessness of multitudes,

who need mercy and yet seek it not, who may have it for the asking and yet will not offer up one prayer for it, to whom and to whose very doors the conveyance of it is made, and who, besides, are even invited, yea besought, to accept of it *without money and without price*? Strange inconsistency! not to be accounted for but upon the principle already referred to; not to be corrected but by the agency of the Divine Spirit.

But we have now to consider the behaviour of Joseph to his brethren at their second interview with him.

“And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive: and they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there,” &c.—Genesis xliii. 26–30.

In the character of Joseph high principle and tender feeling appear to have been nicely balanced. It is indeed somewhat difficult to determine whether the *great* or the *amiable* qualities of mind were most illustrated by him. It consists with experience that a due admixture of the two is of hard attainment.

Sometimes we shall see men, faithful even to admiration in the trusts assigned to them, maintaining an integrity which nothing can break down, exercising a perseverance that may well be called indomitable, and commanding, by their nobility of mind, the respect of society, who are yet wanting in those affections and sensibilities of the heart which give a grace and charm to human nature. They are the cedars that form the glory of Lebanon. At other times we shall find men characterised more by gentleness of feeling than strength of determination, or energy of mind ; formed more for the domestic circle than the theatre of active life ; not wanting in moral principle, but swayed by affection more than reason ; kind, meek, and companionable, rather than bold, firm, and decisive. They are the plants that love the shade ; graceful and fragrant, but slender withal. In the character of Joseph, however, the virtues meet in due proportion. We see him acting upon the principle that "to every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven ; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing." Anxious, as he no doubt was, to meet again his brethren, and to receive accounts from them of his early home, he suffers not this natural curiosity to interfere with his performance of duty as Egypt's governor. Seeing them arrive once more in the land, he directs the steward of his house to observe towards them the rites of hospitality, while he himself goes to attend the business devolving on him as Pharaoh's minister. "At noon," his own accustomed hour of dinner, he will have leisure to converse with them. *Now* the affairs of state demand his care, and the time set apart for

these may not be broken in upon. Here then, we say, is a delicate intimation,

1. *Of Joseph's conscientious regard to the duties of office.*—It would have been highly gratifying to him, no doubt, again to commune with them in reference to topics that lay near his heart ; to watch, as he had done before, the workings of nature and conscience within them ; to surrender himself to the influence of associations at once pleasurable and sacred. But this was not now the time for it. The interesting conference must be postponed till the public duties of the day have been performed. Pleasure must give way to business ; even the claims of friendship must bend to those of office. When he undertook the management of Pharaoh's kingdom, he engaged to be faithful ; and, with the high sense of responsibility which he possessed, he could not devote to personal concerns the hours appropriated to other uses. As an upright and trustworthy man, therefore, he followed not the leanings of nature but the calls of conscience.

And surely, then, if the behaviour of Joseph in the present instance be (as who can doubt ?) highly commendable, it must convey a pointed rebuke to those who suffer the hours of active duty to be broken in upon by mere diversions, for which no plea of necessity can be urged. The great principle of ORDER demands of every professing Christian that he should divide his time into separate portions, and that with the work proper to any one of these nothing else should be allowed to interfere. Thus only can a due balance be maintained between personal and relative claims. Thus only, moreover, can the duties connected with either be successfully discharged.

But alas ! is it not true that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light ! For one that acts upon this principle in secular affairs, you may find twenty that disregard it in the higher matters of religion. Yet, if it be true that the soul is more precious than the body, ought not the hours which devotion claims as her own to be still more sacredly observed ? Should not the excuses which are reckoned invalid in the one case be esteemed so *a fortiore* in the other ? But is it so ? Who will deny that in a multitude of instances he has suffered himself to be influenced by reasons which, if brought to bear upon his worldly pursuits, he would have dismissed as unworthy of a hearing ? How often, for example, has the religious exercise been abridged, the work of family devotion hurried over, or the family prayer shortened, for no other cause than that a friendly visit had been paid to the dwelling, which it was held polite to honour with as much time as could possibly be spared from that ordinarily devoted to other and higher uses ? Not an hour sooner may the man return from the business of the shop or the labours of the farm on account of his friend. No ; *there* the claims of business are paramount ; regularity is everything ; the principle of order cannot on any consideration be disregarded. Not so, however, in regard to the hours of prayer. From *these* as much may be abstracted as politeness or the love of conversation wills. Here there is full liberty of shortening, if not pretermittting altogether ; and yet, strange to say, it is verbally acknowledged all the while that religion *is the one thing needful* ! It were easy to extend these remarks to practices which every one at all conversant with the world must be aware are too com-

mon on the day which the Great Ruler of the world claims as his own. But it is unnecessary; for it must be evident that, if the above principle be worth anything, it must apply with the greatest force to such cases as these. And it were well, indeed, if the men whose attention to business is punctiliously and commendably exact would but open their eyes to the force of it. They do well in waiting so diligently upon their secular interests. Would they not do yet better in watching with at least equal care at the gates of heavenly wisdom? Is it consistent in them, as persons professing godliness, to be so prudently economical of the time which is appropriated to worldly uses, and yet lavish or reckless of that which religion demands—to permit no claim to interfere with the first; and yet sustain as an adequate excuse every idle or frivolous inroad upon the second? Verily, did they regard the soul's welfare as the highest good, such things could not be. The Sunday newspaper would lie by unopened, the convivial engagement would be abandoned, the pleasure walk would be discontinued. As surely as they deemed the happiness of eternity more valuable than the pleasures of time, so surely would they act upon the principle, that with those hours in which God claims a special propriety, nothing secular should intermeddle. To say nothing of the express command which has been given us to keep holy the Sabbath day, is it not enough that all unnecessary employments or recreations on that day have an evident tendency to distract the mind, and to hinder it from resuming, in a proper temper, the exercises which have thus been interrupted? As, therefore, we hold the obligations of our heavenly calling to be

high and sacred—as we believe the things of eternity to be superior in importance to those of time—and as we would that our spirits, when they engage in religious services should be devoutly fixed, let us make conscience of keeping with the utmost possible regularity the seasons proper to meditation, reading, or prayer. Let neither the retirement of the closet be invaded, nor the rest of the Sabbath broken, by alien avocations. Intent on the prosecution of the true riches, let us transfer to this end the energy and decision of purpose, the close attention, and the steady endeavour which we see indispensably necessary to worldly success. Let us “transplant into Canaan the fruits of Egypt.” In one word, let us, as we believe religion to be the main business of our lives, derive to ourselves instruction and rebuke from the persevering vigilance of the men who rise early and sit up late that they may add house to house and field to field. Shall it be said that they are so eager in the pursuit of “lying vanities,” while we are inactive or remiss in gaining the wealth of the just?

It is because this principle is not acted upon, that some men are ever learning, and yet never able to obtain knowledge of the truth. Their affections, it may be, are enlivened, their hearts seriously impressed. But because frivolous occurrences are allowed to exercise an unreasonable hold over them, the good impression is obliterated, the better purpose vanishes. They leave the house of prayer more serious and heavenly-minded, perhaps, than when they entered it; but, by the way home, some idle thought is indulged, some worldly conversation started. By giving scope to it, their minds are, by the power of association,

drawn as far as may be from the subject that engaged them in the sanctuary ; and when in the evening hour they again make an effort to call back their thoughts to it, weariness and languor ensue. Conscience has now lost its fine edge, the harmony of the soul is found to have been broken, and, do what they may, they cannot dispel the cloud of worldliness that has gathered over them. The advantage is lost—the gain, which might have been great, is inconsiderable. Would this be deemed prudent in relation to ordinary business ? Assuredly not. How can it then be excused in reference to religion, which as much transcends every other concern as the heaven does the earth.

2. *In the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren we are presented with a fine illustration of his tender and affectionate nature.*—The active duties which devolved upon him being rendered, he then returns to domestic bliss. His brethren, anxious no doubt, for the issue, present him, in their father's name, with the balm, the honey, and the spices which Canaan produced ; and he, with an admirable mixture of grace and dignity, asks them of their own and the old man's welfare. The sight of Benjamin, however, *his own mother's son*, is too affecting for him. It carries back his thoughts to the days of other years. It connects him not only with the living but with the dead. His heart can stand it no longer. " His bowels did yearn upon his brother." Fain would he embrace him, but that may not yet be. This were to reveal too soon the secret which he alone knows. Therefore, lest their suspicions should be awakened, does he make haste, and seek where to weep :—*and entering into his chamber he weeps there.*

There was moral beauty in those tears, and we love

Joseph all the more for them. They let us into his very heart, and we now believe him to be as amiable in feeling as before we believed him to be great in principle. The moral grandeur of his character is illustrated by them, as the height of the mountain is by the rainbow that spans it. That great Governor of Egypt, then, whose fame is over many lands, and the wisdom of whose counsels has rendered the country of the Pharaohs prosperous above all that surround it, is yet a man of the most generous and tender sensibilities, having not only the head to plan and the hand to execute, but the heart to sympathise and the eye to weep. How meet a prototype of the blessed Saviour, who blended, as had never before been blended, majesty and meekness, dignity and grace ; who, armed with a power that made the devils tremble, yet possessed a gentleness that flowed in tears at the sight of sorrows not his own. It moves us to read that Joseph entered into his chamber, that his affectionate sympathies might find their free and natural expression. How may it melt us, then, into very tenderness to read that JESUS WEPT ! Yes, HE wept, who appeared in our world as Jehovah's Minister, whose power the wildest elements in nature submitted to, and whose dominion the very fiends acknowledged ; HE wept. What shall be thought of his tears ? Are they not precious drops ? May they not gladden a mourner's heart ? may they not encourage the timid and the downcast to trust themselves in the keeping of this mighty yet gracious Being, this Friend that loveth at all times, this Brother that is born for adversity ? By those tears which Joseph shed we know him to be a compassionate man ; and we could trust him, we think, were we brought into his presence,

with our most secret griefs. True ; but *he* is ignorant of us, and our sorrows cannot be told into his ear. What, then, should we think of Him whose sympathy is far more tender, and whose power is incomparably greater ? Joseph is dead, but Jesus lives. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus is alive for evermore, and we may freely cast upon him the burden of all our cares. There is not one pain that we can feel, nor one sigh that we can heave, which he did not anticipate in the days of his flesh. Highly exalted as now he is, he yet has, and ever shall have, *a human heart*. When no one else can sympathise with us, *He* will ; when those who are most intimate with us are unable to enter into our feelings, He can understand them perfectly. Our very groans, which cannot be uttered, are to Him perfectly intelligible. The thoughts within us, “which lie too deep for tears,” He can interpret. Never did brother so feel for brother as He does for his people. Let us go, then, with boldness to His throne of grace. In those sad seasons, when lover and acquaintance are put far from us, and when even “our own familiar friend” fails us, let us pour out our hearts before Him ; let us be free and unreserved in our communications with him ; let us breathe out before him our most ardent desires, and tell him our utmost needs. Joseph could not afford to show tenderness at all times ; but our Elder Brother is always at leisure. He even *waits* to be gracious.

“ We may look home, and seek in vain
A fond fraternal heart ;
But Christ hath given his promise plain
To do a brother's part.”

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

AN UNLOOKED FOR INCIDENT.

"A friend that frowns
Is better than a smiling enemy;
We welcome clouds which bring the former rain,
Though they the present prospect blacken round,
And shade the beauties of the opening year;
That, by their stores enrich'd the earth may yield
A fruitful summer and a plenteous crop."

SWAINE

THE brethren of Joseph had " marvelled one at another," when they found themselves seated before him, " the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth." But the ease and courtesy which the Governor manifested to them, soon dispelled every shadow of apprehension from their minds. " They drank, and were merry with him." But a fresh and unlooked for trial awaited them on their return towards Canaan. For as we read:—

" Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn-money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men ; and when thou

dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. Behold, the money which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how, then, should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house (for he was yet there); and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found. And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."—Genesis xlv. 1—17.

Sudden and unlooked for adversity ! Already had they been kindly feasted in the Governor's house, and their sacks being again filled with corn, it seemed as if they had nought to do but go on their way rejoicing. Unconscious of what, according to Joseph's orders, had been done, they journey homeward. Probably they communed with each other as to the unaccountable kindness which Pharaoh's minister had shown, and congratulated themselves above all on the prospect of being able ere long to disappoint their old father's fears in regard to the safety of his beloved son. We can easily imagine the satisfaction felt on this point by Judah in particular, who had with much difficulty prevailed upon the patriarch to let Benjamin go. Soon, however, very soon, was their complacency to be disturbed. For, when they were yet not a great way out of the city, a messenger comes after them in haste, charges them with base ingratitude, and accuses them of having stolen from the table, where they had been so hospitably entertained, a valuable cup of silver. It is easy, too, to form an idea of the alarm which must now have seized them, and of the vehement indignation with which, guiltless as they were of the crime charged against them, they exclaimed—"God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing." Nothing in the world had been farther from their thoughts or intentions ; and so, with all the unaffected earnestness of men whose consciences were clear in the matter, they call God to witness that they heartily detested the iniquity ascribed to them. They appeal to the fact that they had voluntarily brought back the money which, on the former occasion, had been unaccountably restored to them. On this they build the con-

clusion that they might well be presumed most unlikely persons to commit a deed of theft in the very house of the Governor by whose kindness they were so largely benefited. Was it to be supposed that they who had acted thus honourably in a matter that might never have been discovered, would behave so unworthily in regard to a thing which must inevitably have been brought to light? So, conscious to themselves of innocence, they declare that, if upon any one of them the cup that was awanting should be found, they would with one accord submit to have the sentence of death passed upon him, while the rest would hold themselves the Governor's bondmen. Judge, then, of their astonishment and perplexity when, one sack after another being searched, the cup was at length found in that of Benjamin—the person in whose safety their very souls were bound up, and of the slightest mischance to whom they were so tenderly apprehensive! Oh! doubtless, when in every sack that had been opened in succession proof was obtained of each brother's innocence, a feeling of triumph would be experienced by them over the steward, who had charged them so causelessly; and, sure as they believed themselves to be that Benjamin was the very last person in the world to conceive the idea of such a crime, they must have been on the very point of expressing their indignant resentment at the unworthy imputation. But, alas, just when their confidence must have been at its height, was the discovery made. Benjamin's sack is opened, and there the treasure is found!

Unhappy men! What shall they now say for themselves, and what *can* they do? In vain would they

now call heaven to witness their innocence. There was no *reasoning against facts*. How the cup had found its way thither they might not be able to explain ; *there*, however, it was ; and there seemed nothing for it but that they must henceforth be looked upon as a company of thieves. Let them say what they chose, who would believe them ? Nor was even this the worst of it ; for it now followed, that, in terms of their own proposal, Benjamin must needs die. And what account could they then render to their father Jacob, who, even at their most urgent entreaties and strong protestations, could with difficulty be persuaded to let him go ? This was the hardest matter of all. No wonder, then, that they rent their clothes in an agony of grief, and that, when brought before the Governor himself, they exclaimed, in the utmost consternation, " What shall we say unto my lord ? or how shall we clear ourselves ? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. Behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found."

But what, it may be asked, was the use of this strange expedient ? This we have already in part answered in a former chapter, where the first meeting of Joseph and his brethren is considered ; but, in addition to what has there been remarked, we may observe, that in this way did Joseph make more thorough proof of his brethren's repentance. On the former occasion he had heard them express penitence for their behaviour to himself, but it was now to be ascertained whether that penitence was deep and fixed, or transient and momentary. And now that they again stood in perplexity before him, he found that

Judah still reflected upon their past iniquity, and associated the present calamity with an idea of retributive justice. By this means, too, he put to the test the sincerity of their regard for Benjamin: "The man," said he, "in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get ye up in peace unto your father."

Here, then, was an opportunity afforded for letting their true character develop itself; for if they had been now as thoroughly selfish as formerly, they would have used the freedom which the governor allowed them, and have left Benjamin to his fate. But no. It is now seen that their hearts are much changed. To save Benjamin's life they are contented to pass their own in servitude. To spare their good old father's feelings, they are willing to abide as bondsmen in a strange land. In short, they are pleased to *do* anything, and *suffer* anything, so Jacob may again receive in safety the lad dearest to his heart.

1. *From this portion of the narrative we are taught in the first place, that what appear to be the most harsh dealings of God towards his people, are justified even by a reference to the plans adopted by one friend towards another.*—It was to all appearance, at first view, a stern and unaccountable proceeding which Joseph here adopted. But the design and the issue of it were alike good. And so, too, there are many of the doings of Providence which seem at the first to argue little for the goodness of God, and to contribute little to the welfare of his people. When, however, the conclusion is evolved, it is found that all was wisely planned and rightly executed. He brings them into straits that his deliverance of them may ap-

pear glorious. He gives them of the waters of bitterness, that they may appreciate the better the sweetness of his consolations. He takes them into the wilderness, that they may understand the value of the good and comfortable words which he there addresses to the weary. He leads them up the steep and rugged mountain's side, that from its eminence they may gain a more enlarged view, and breathe a purer atmosphere than could have been done by them had they remained at less inconvenience in the plain below. He suffers them to mourn and weep, that they may know how graciously his own hand can bind up their wounds and wipe away their tears. He humbles, in order that he may exalt them, and brings them down in order that he may raise them up. Thus it is that he tries and proves them. Thus he evidences their dispositions, their sincerity, their strength of principle. Had not Joseph thus exercised his brethren, we should not have known what was either the depth of their penitence, or the tenderness of their regard for Benjamin, or the strength of their filial affection for Jacob. As it was, all these things were brought into lively manifestation. And so is it with the children of God. Who could tell what patience resides in the bosom of one man that has never sustained an injury, or what the submissiveness is of a second on whom no heavy afflictions have been imposed, or what the moral fortitude is of a third who has never been called to daring and perilous service? Let no one, then, complain of the Almighty's doings. Shall human policy be highly admired, and shall it not be confessed that heavenly wisdom is justified of her children?

2. *We may hence learn that it is not always safe*

or right to conjecture what men shall do from what they have already done.—The brethren of Joseph had at one time been most unmercifully wicked. Hating him without an adequate cause, they plotted mischief against his peace. Reviling him as an idle dreamer, they took it ill that he should set up intimations of superiority, and, when a favourable opportunity presented itself, they conspired to slay him. Although an amiable and motherless lad, they had no pity on him ; although his loss was sure to vex, beyond measure, a father's affectionate heart, they heeded not the consideration ; and, although he had come to them over the mountains, faint and wearied with his journey, they cast him into a pit where no water was. Although ten thousand arguments pleaded for mercy to him, they relented not ; and, though he besought them in the anguish of his soul, they would not hear. Yet now these very men are contented to do anything to save the life of Benjamin, their father's favourite son. Although they have had no voluntary hand in bringing him to his untimely fate, they cannot think of abandoning him to it ; although self-interest might now devise many excuses for leaving him behind, they can sustain none. They who in Dothan were so merciless to Joseph's cries, are now in Egypt full of tenderness to Benjamin ; they who had there sinned against every pious consideration, are here feelingly alive to every amiable and generous impulse ; they who had then a variety of motives to save Joseph, and yet would not do it, are now determined to sacrifice their own lives and liberties so that Benjamin may be free.

Who, then, shall dare to affirm that repentance is a

thing impossible? who shall venture to assert that a youth of thoughtlessness can never be succeeded by a manhood of virtuous consideration? Perhaps the very child that now most thwarts a parent's wishes, and whom neither the solemnity of a father's counsel nor the eloquence of a mother's tears can move from his career of waywardness, may yet, wrought upon unexpectedly by the agency of God's spirit, be brought to acknowledge the error of his ways, and to cherish with pious reverence the old age of those whose instructions he has hitherto spurned. Perhaps the profane man, whose talk is now mischievous madness, may be led, ere his life shall terminate, to speak with becoming seriousness of the divine things which he long derided, and to sing with heartfelt devotion the songs of Zion. Perhaps the now cruel and heartless tyrant may, in an unlooked-for hour, be smitten with remorse for the bad use which he has made of his authority, and devote the evening of his years to the planning and establishment of humane and benevolent institutions. He who has the hearts of all men in his hand can still turn them, as he did those of Joseph's brethren, from disobedience to the wisdom of the just.

At all events, it becomes every person who reads the history under consideration to ask himself: Am I better or worse than I was so many years ago? is my natural temper improved, or rendered more incorrigible? am I gaining or losing in regard to the virtues of justice, generosity, and self-denial? do I find greater or less pleasure than I then did in discharging the offices of mercy? and is it like violence to my very nature to neglect an opportunity of well-doing? These and similar inquiries are naturally suggested

by the narrative in question. If we can answer them satisfactorily, let us pray God to perfect whatever may be yet lacking in us ; and if we *cannot*, let us be induced to ponder the necessity of immediate repentance for our past neglects.

3. *We are hence taught how very hazardous it is to pronounce a final judgment upon what is called circumstantial evidence.*—The case of Benjamin was precisely of this sort. Every circumstance appeared to bear upon the establishment of his guilt ; yet he was innocent as the child unborn.

Never, indeed, was there a more lively illustration than in the case before us of the incompetency of this sort of evidence. Never was there a case in which the presumptions against the accused looked stronger. A cup, a silver cup, was amissing ; and who could have taken it but the strangers that came down to Egypt to buy corn ? They had been in the Governor's house, and, suspicious-looking persons as they were, there was every reason to believe that they had cast an evil eye upon the cup, and taken the first occasion to conceal it. Pursuit is made. A charge is preferred against them, and, like practised rogues, they indignantly and solemnly disavow it. Nay, like hardened villains, they call heaven to witness that they are innocent, and even have the effrontery to pretend that the one, if one there be, in whose possession it is found shall die. Search is at length made, and, after all the protestations and solemn appeals that they had uttered, the silver cup is found in their youngest brother's sack ; and then, when the discovery *was* made, so confused and terrified they looked ! Could any thing be more clearly made out, so far as circumstan-

tial evidence goes, than the guilt of these men ? True, indeed, nobody had ever *seen* them take the cup ; but they were *suspected* of it ; it was *found* in their possession ; and every other particular of the case *strengthened the conviction*. The circumstances, indeed, were such as could not fail to make a strong impression upon the mind of any jury ; and yet, after all, Benjamin and the rest of them were quite as innocent as they pretended.

We say, therefore, that nothing is more dangerous or unjust than to condemn a fellow-creature, be the appearances what they may, on evidence of this sort. Yet we have strong reason to believe that this has repeatedly happened. The innocent have been wrongfully charged, unjustly condemned, and unrighteously put to death merely because the *verisimilitudes* of their guilt were strong. For years after their execution they were believed guilty, until at length either some additional circumstance was discovered that gave a different complexion to the affair, or the conscience of the real criminal was aroused to make confession of the truth. Blunders such as these are a stain to the judicial records of almost every country under heaven, and the knowledge of them ought to render those to whom judgment is committed exceedingly jealous of the particular evidence to which we refer. Circumstantial evidence, it should be remembered, is valuable, not in supplying the defect of positive or direct testimony, but only in so far as it corroborates that testimony. It may justly enough be made use of to cast additional light upon existing evidence, but not to constitute a separate and independent ground of judgment.

4. *We may hence learn the baseness of ingratitude:*

—Although Joseph's brethren were truly innocent of the crime charged against them, yet the steward, on the *supposition* of their being guilty, insinuated this as an aggravation of it, that *they had rendered evil for good*. Had it been true that any one of them took from the Governor's house that cup of silver, it would have been a horrible offence against the ordinary civilities of life. To have been feasted at the Ruler's expense, and so hospitably entertained by him that they even felt themselves at perfect ease in his presence, and, after all this, to abuse his goodness by carrying away with them a piece of valuable furniture! Than this what could be more base and villainous? The very thought of it was intolerable to themselves: "God forbid," said they, "that thy servants should do according to this thing."

Let us, then, ever remember that as it is our bounden duty even to do good for evil, it will be most shameful for us, in any one instance, so far to forget our obligations to those who have befriended us as to render evil for good. Let the kindnesses and courtesies which are extended to us be inscribed on marble, while we write the injuries that are done to us upon sand. An ungrateful man is, by common consent, regarded as a monster in human nature. And according as the good done to him was great, his ingratitude is deemed proportionably odious.

Shall it be said, then, and justly said, that ingratitude to our earthly benefactors is base and abominable, and yet nothing be thought of ingratitude to God, from whom every good and perfect gift comes down? Is there a single comfort that we enjoy but

proceeds either directly or indirectly from him? Has not he watched over every step of our journey through life? Before we could ask him to bless us, had he not loaded us with benefits? Are not the food which we eat and the water which we drink of his creating? And although these things are obtained by the labours of industry, is it not owing to his bountiful arrangement that secondary causes are so blessed? Has not he borne with us when perverse, healed us when sick, and provided for us when in want? If earthly friends have shown us kindness, was it not He who gave them the power, and put it into their hearts? And, more than all, has he not given his own dear Son to suffer and to die that we might be happy eternally? How base, then, to be unthankful unto Him, or to prove forgetful of his benefits! Let us beware, then, lest that should be said by Him of us which was said concerning Judah of old—"What more could have been done to my vineyard that was not done in it? Wherefore, then, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

A PROFERED SUBSTITUTION.

THE speech of Judah in behalf of Benjamin has been long and justly admired as a perfect specimen of artless and unaffected eloquence. Indeed, there is almost nothing within the range of ancient or modern oratory that can stand a comparison with it. The aim of the speaker was to prevail upon the Egyptian Governor to show mercy to a brother, in whose safety the very life of an affectionate parent was bound up ; and to accomplish that object he let nature take her own way. In fact, he says nothing either more or less than she bids him. Nothing material is omitted, nothing irrelevant introduced. Had he studied the rules of oratory all his life long, he could not have done better. It was nature that filled his mouth with arguments, and taught him what to say. " Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth spake." Yes, here, in the infancy of the world, we find a plain and simple-hearted man pleading before a mighty governor with an eloquence which the greatest masters of that art in a more polished age would have deemed themselves happy even to approach. Here is an oration which men of the finest taste in modern times have pronounced unrivalled in its structure, and worthy of being held up as the happiest illustration of rhetorical laws ; and yet it is certain that of these Judah knew literally nothing.

Nature alone was his instructor, Truth his rule, and Affection his guide. Of himself and his own interest he thought not ; his whole heart was in his subject ; all else was swallowed up in the concern which he felt for the lad whose life and liberty he had undertaken to implore ;—and therefore it was that, although he had never formally studied the philosophy of the human mind, he hit with instinctive sagacity the hidden chords of human feeling, and found his way as surely, and yet as delicately, to the Governor's heart as if from his very boyhood he had made the nature of man the subject of metaphysical analysis. Therefore it is that not only no circumstance calculated to bear upon success is omitted, but every circumstance is introduced in the most fitting place, and at the most proper time. With all the simplicity of truth he goes over the history of the case ; and, with all the earnestness of a man who believes what he asserts, he beseeches the Governor to weigh it. Sincerity did for him what the most elaborate and pompous diction would have failed to do. It was not his ambition to shine as an orator. All that he wanted was to get Benjamin free. Could he accomplish this, he cared for nothing more ; and so, with his whole soul in the cause and his best affections at work, he commanded the heart of him who ruled the kingdom of the Pharaohs.

“ Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant, for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father or a brother ? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a

little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down; if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant, my father, said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since; and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest per-

adventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."
—Genesis xlv. 18–34.

Than this simple statement what, to any heart of ordinary sensibility, could be more moving? "We have a father, an old man;" one, therefore, who must already have seen many changes and undergone many trials; whom we cannot, according to the course of nature, reasonably expect to have with us long, and whose feelings it would be most injurious to wound. And then, "a child of his old age, a little one, and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him."

Little, indeed, did Judah suspect that the brother of whom he spake stood before him as Egypt's Governor. But the narrative was enough to melt the heart of a stranger. No wonder that it powerfully affected him, who, though the speaker knew it not, was deeply and personally interested in it.

We shall not, however, say more in regard to Judah's pathetic supplication. Every man of ordinary judgment and feeling must himself be able to discover its beauties. And they are things, "not to be told but felt."

Of greater importance is it to observe, that the prominent doctrine of Christianity (that, namely of vicarious punishment) is in strict accordance with the analogy of nature. They who object against this leading peculiarity of the gospel system, should first acquaint themselves with the feelings and instincts lodged within the human heart. For, in strictness of speech, the objection taken against the appointment of a substitute for sinners, is an objection against the very constitution of human nature. Almighty God

has planted in the bosom of man an expectation that for an offence committed against an earthly governor pardon may be obtained, if an adequate satisfaction can be rendered, and an innocent person can be found to suffer voluntarily in the room of the guilty one. Before, then, any reasonable exception is taken in regard to the doctrine of Christ's vicarious sufferings, it should in reason be demonstrated that the expectation referred to has no foundation in nature. But this it will be impossible to do; for we find that no notion is more generally diffused, and no proposal more readily acceded to. In the instance before us, we see Judah building upon the strength of it an argument for Benjamin's liberation. He does not solicit at the hands of Joseph an absolute reversal of the sentence which had been pronounced against the supposed offender; he desires only that the punishment be transferred from Benjamin to himself. In this way the authority of law would at once be upheld, and the liberation of Benjamin secured. Justice would lose none of her rights, while, at the same time, mercy would be exercised. It might not consist with the understood principles of government, to pass an act of unconditional clemency, and allow the young man to go his way as if no wrong had been done; for who could say in what pernicious results a precedent of this nature might terminate? But nothing hindered that, if Judah were accepted in Benjamin's stead, the latter might depart and enjoy as aforetime the comforts of his native dwelling. To this proposal nothing could in equity be objected; all that the law demanded was, that the crime should be punished. And surely, then, if Judah can discharge the office of a servant as

well as Benjamin, no loss is sustained on the governor's part, while, at the same time, great grace is vouchsafed to the guilty individual. It was nature that prompted the resolution, and pleaded so eloquently for the acceptance of it. The whole speech of Judah, indeed, from beginning to end, is true to nature ; and this part of it to which we now refer, is founded on a moral instinct, which no sophistry can overcome. The anxious man sees one way, and only one, by which his brother may be dismissed with impunity ; and that is a way in which none of the governor's rights are compromised ; in which all may be rendered that justice has exacted ; in which the supremacy of the law may be maintained, while, at the same time, the mild attribute of mercy may be illustrated. True, indeed, it depended altogether on the governor's pleasure, whether he would accept the proffered substitution. But as there was nothing in it at all incongruous with the principles of rectitude, and as, moreover, the very idea of it had a foundation in nature, Judah pleaded earnestly that the proposal might be complied with.

Let such, then, as find fault with the doctrine of the gospel be persuaded to look a little more carefully than they have hitherto done into the constitution of human nature ; and in the voluntary offer of Judah to be a bondman in his brother's stead, let them learn that the sufferings of the holy child Jesus in the room of sinful men are by no means so repugnant to the sense of justice lodged within the human bosom as they have ventured to assert. Will they go so far as to pronounce unreasonable the plan which Judah suggested to gain a brother's liberty ? We believe not.

How, then, can they pronounce unreasonable the scheme adopted by the son of God to save many thousands of souls? Every man whose heart is not utterly dead to moral feeling, must admire the proposal of Judah. But, as it is only a faint illustration of the Christian doctrine, the very reason that is in man may well bear witness to the inspired truth, that "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

The reasonableness of substitution, in fact, will be questioned by none who have either been accustomed to consider their own frame, or to mark the usages of society.

To accomplish, however, the deliverance of a guilty person, in the way of which we speak, there are certain principles, the union of which is indispensably necessary. If any one of them shall fail, the substitution must be held incompetent.

1. *First of all, the consent of the substitute must be obtained.*—In other words, the sufferings or the service to be rendered must be voluntary. Where this is not the case an immutable rule of justice is transgressed. For no man is obliged against his will to undergo the punishment which another has merited. This were to fly in the face of all rectitude, and break down the unchangeable distinctions between good and evil. That a man is answerable for himself alone and not for another (except in so far as he may have helped to corrupt him) is a first principle in morals, and can never, by any authority, be set aside. If you compel a man against his inclination to bear the punishment of another, you may satisfy the demands of law, but you violate what are older and more authoritative than law,

the principles of justice. The debt that had been incurred may thus be paid, but it is at the expence of equity. The criminal may thus be let go ; but it is by the perpetration of another crime, on the part of the government, yet more black and abominable than that which has ben so unrighteously pardoned. On the contrary, if the substitute shall have consented to the arrangement, the principles of justice are maintained sacred, and the natural rights of the individual are not interfered with. For Joseph to have compelled Judah to serve in Benjamin's stead would have been an act of unjustifiable despotism. But to allow the voluntary substitution was at once merciful and equitable.

2. *Not only must the substitution be voluntary, but the substitute must himself be innocent of the offence for which he agrees to suffer.*—To no purpose might he offer himself in the room of another, unless free from the guilt which exposes that other to punishment. In that case, he could serve only for himself, and, so long as the term of that service lasted, he could do nothing in behalf of his neighbour. Thus it would have been with Judah, if in his own sack, as in Benjamin's, one article of the Governor's furniture had been found. This would have utterly disqualified him for the service which he proposed. How could he, whose own misdeeds merited punishment, satisfy for the offences of another man ? How could he, who himself needed forgiveness, procure favour for a fellow-criminal ? Is it not evident that, to one so circumstanced who should make such a proposal, the Governor might reasonably answer—
“Go, first satisfy for thyself, and then offer to re-

deem thy brother." He who would merit pardon for a guilty creature must himself be innocent of the crime. He who would discharge the debts of another must himself be free from legal responsibility. With what face should he offer himself in the room of another, on whom and all that he had the law had already an unquestionable claim? His person is not his own to dispose of; his goods and his labour being already forfeited, he has no right to propose substitution; in doing so, he betrays at once the most lamentable ignorance of his own condition and of the claims of justice. It was because Judah's hands were clean, while those of his younger brother *appeared* to have been stained with iniquity, that he hoped to be admitted as a bondman in Benjamin's stead.

3. *Not only must the substitution be voluntary, and the substitute innocent of the crime; it is still further necessary that the service which he is willing to render shall be fully equivalent to that which the law had imposed upon the party in whose stead he offers himself.*—Were not this the case, mercy would be honoured at the expence of justice. The dignity of the Governor's rights would be affected; and, on the very same principle that a part of the punishment was remitted, the whole might be dispensed with. Had Judah's been in the eye of the law a less useful or valuable life than Benjamin's, he could not with any propriety have hoped that his offer would be complied with. Say, for example, that he was a person of advanced age, who had outlived his strength, and, in the course of nature, was likely to be very soon incapacitated for discharging the functions of a servant; say, that he was a person of a

sickly temperament, while Benjamin was a young man of a robust constitution and vigorous frame ; suppose, in one word, that the latter was capable of yielding far more extensive and important advantages than the former was able to render, then would it have been in a high degree unreasonable for Judah either to offer or to urge such a plea. But as there was nothing of this sort ; as, on the contrary, humanly speaking, Judah, from his greater experience and superior strength, was likely to be even more useful than his younger and more delicate brother, no reasonable objection could be offered on this ground. There was no impediment, either in point of law or equity. He, therefore, who made the proposal, could with proportional confidence anticipate a favourable answer to his prayer.

4. *To render a profered substitution available, the consent of the Governor himself is also indispensable.* — With him lies the right of accepting or refusing the proposal ; no matter that a willing substitute is found to put himself in the guilty one's stead ; no matter that in the eye of the law that substitute is himself guiltless of the crime ; no matter, too, that he is in all respects competent to discharge the work which he has undertaken, if yet he with whom the final determination rests shall impose his negative on the arrangement. Notwithstanding that Judah so generously devoted himself to servitude for his brother's sake— notwithstanding, too, that he was both legally and morally qualified to act in that capacity, it still remained with Joseph himself to say whether the substitution should be accepted or rejected. But for the goodwill of the Governor, Judah might have served

all the days of his life in hard bondage, and the question might still have been asked, Who required this at your hand? There was no obligation on the part of Joseph to wave his claims on Benjamin, even although Judah and all his other brethren had united in the same prayer. Their combined services, although ten times greater than those of Benjamin, were not the very thing that the law required, and might have insisted upon. The acceptance of any equivalent was a matter of pure grace on his side, and could not be urged as a matter of debt on theirs. To any one who should murmur against the apparent rigour of his administration he might justly say, "Have I not liberty to do what I will with mine own? *This* man is even by your own consent my servant; your substitution of yourselves in his stead cannot in the slightest degree alter the legality of my claim; on that I take my stand; no matter that your services are even much better than his; it is on him and not on you that I assert a right. This I am entitled to demand, and I shall be satisfied, with nothing else."

Such, no doubt, would have been the reply of a haughty and implacable tyrant; but the experience which Judah already had of Joseph's kindness forbade him to apprehend that such would be the issue of his application. Therefore, while he supplicated him as a Governor, he besought him as a man; and, while by offering himself in the stead of Benjamin he testified his respect for the majesty of the law, he also by the hopeful tone of his expostulation argued the honourable sense which he entertained of that Governor's mercy.

Let us now, then, briefly notice the fulfilment of

these several conditions in the satisfaction rendered by Jesus Christ for sinful men. If it shall be found that each of these great principles is there illustrated, let the common sense of nature itself cry "shame" upon that scepticism of mind which would denounce as irrational the doctrine of salvation by a Redeemer.

1. *First of all, then—Did he serve and suffer willingly?* If he *did not*, then may the infidel hold firmly by his position that the doctrine of the gospel is an injurious reflection upon the righteousness of God. It would, indeed, shock all our notions of rectitude to suppose that an innocent person should be compelled to bear the punishment due to the guilty. "Let every man bear his own burden," is the great maxim of justice. It is a principle which holds on earth; and, to suppose that it did not obtain in heaven, were to suppose that the ethics of eternity were less pure than those of time. But if he *did*, then is the objector silenced by the testimony of that voice from within the human heart, one whisper of which is worth all the reasonings of philosophy. It was affection that moved Judah to offer himself in Benjamin's stead; and who is there that sees not in the proposal a lovely exhibition of respect on the one hand, for the authority of law, and of an instinctive confidence on the other in the tendencies of mercy. There was one way, and only one, by which it seemed to him that the two could be reconciled. Love prompted, and reason approved of it. The substitute himself being pleased, there was no injustice in the matter. And so, too, if the guilt of man's transgression was willingly borne by Christ our Saviour, every mouth may well be stopped; the righ-

teousness of God is vindicated, and it is not for the creatures of yesterday to object to the arrangement.

That the sufferings of Jesus were voluntarily undergone, we need no other testimony than his own. "No man," says he, "taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." When sacrifice and burnt-offering were of no avail, he said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." When neither in earth nor heaven an intercessor or messenger could be found, his language was, "Here am I, send me." The miracles which he wrought among the people proved beyond all controversy his Almighty power; but, easy as it would have been for him to exercise it for his own preservation, he studiously forbore. Although at his call twelve legions of angels would have descended to his rescue, he asked not their attendance; although, by a single volition of his soul, he could have come down from the cross on which he was bound, he was obedient unto death. He had a baptism to be baptised with, and he was straitened till it was accomplished; he went as a willing victim to the altar of burnt-offering. Not more by his Father's ordination than by his own voluntary consent, he died the just for the unjust.

2. *Again, had he been guilty of any offence against the Majesty of Heaven, he could not have stood as the substitute of any other offender.*—In that case, so far from being able to save others, he could not have saved himself. Himself a debtor to justice, how could he have undertaken the remission of other men's sins? Was it for one who had been righteously condemned to die, to assume the power of purchasing

life for his fellow-criminals, or of obtaining gifts for the rebellious? Had this been the case, he would not have been such a High Priest as became us. The redemption of our souls must, in so far as he was concerned, have ceased for ever. Against the man who would put himself in a transgressor's stead, there must be nothing legally chargeable. If there be, the law has a hold upon him already; and if he cannot satisfy even for himself, how can he undertake for another? The blessed Jesus, however, was in all respects undefiled by sin. Having been conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, he was miraculously preserved from the stain of original guilt; and as, during the whole course of his life, his meat and drink was to do the will of his Father in Heaven, the prince of this world could find nothing in him. His perfect innocence was attested alike by friends and foes, by God and man, by heaven and hell. They who were with him from the beginning of his public ministry could testify that he went about doing good. The judge who condemned him to death acknowledged that he could find no fault in him, and, to show his own convictions, washed his hands publicly before the multitude. The traitor, who for a contemptible sum of money had put him into their hands, cried out in an agony of remorse, "I have betrayed innocent blood;" a heathen centurion who witnessed the horrors of his crucifixion was made to exclaim, "Truly this was a righteous man;" devils themselves confessed him to be the Holy One of God; and, more than all, a voice from the excellent glory declared concerning him, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am always well-pleased. Whether, in one word, we view him as

doing or as enduring, as serving or as suffering, we may well say, Never man lived, never man died like this man. Therefore it is, that, having no sins of his own to answer for, he can make intercession for the transgressors; having in his own person obeyed the law, he can offer himself as a substitute for the offender; knowing no sin, he may become a sin-offering for us; he is not only a willing but a holy victim—a lamb without blemish and without spot.

3. *Then, as to the third condition, let it be but considered whether the obedience of Christ be not a full and complete satisfaction for the sins of many.*—If it be, then is the doctrine of his own atonement in harmony with all that our natural reason teaches us concerning the rights of government and the sacredness of law. If not, then may the Infidel boast himself of his ingenuity; for, unless the satisfaction be adequate, there might as well be no attempt at satisfaction at all. That the satisfaction is adequate, however, will readily appear, when it is considered that He who rendered it is Emmanuel, God with us—not only the seed of the woman, but the Lord from heaven. By virtue of the hypostatical union between his divine and human natures, he is able to render a complete and perfect oblation for the sins of myriads. Had he been a righteous *man* only, his righteousness could have benefited but himself. Had he, although mysteriously united to some one of the higher intelligences in the universe, been forced against his own will to endure our curse, the principles of immutable justice would have been violated; but, as it is, he is at once legally competent and morally qualified. As an altar sanctifies a gift, so does the divinity of the one nature sanc-

tify the obedience of the other. Had he been a perfectly righteous man and nothing more, he might have served, but he could not have satisfied. But, from his being both God and Man, in two distinct natures, and one person, he is qualified to become the author of eternal salvation. By virtue of this union his blood is called the blood of God, his merits are infinite, and his sufferings propitiatory.

The vicarious obedience of Christ is an adequate satisfaction, and it is the *only* one.

Of all the questions which can be proposed to a rational mind, this is by far the most important—*How shall man be just with God?* and the more that one thinks of the divine character, the more seriously must this question be pondered. Not revelation alone, but reason and conscience too, testify that God is a moral governor, and that men are accountable to Him for their actions. That He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, is a truth so clearly evidenced that stupidity cannot easily mistake, nor sophistry pervert it. It may be forgotten, but it cannot be disproved. The importance of it may be lost sight of in the heat of business, or the sacredness of it derided in the hours of revelry, but its authority can never be altogether overborne, unless utter violence is done to the very nature which has been given us. Often, when we least suspect it, does a still small voice from within man proclaim to him that he is a subject of God's moral government, and that he must render an account of the deeds done in the body.

The *innocent*, indeed, have nothing to fear. They who have kept the whole law of God in thought, word, and deed, are verily guiltless; *they* may stand boldly

in the face of the universe, and appeal for protection to the righteousness of God. But **WHERE ARE THEY?** Is there one man now living upon the face of the earth who can say with truth, I have made my heart clean, I am free from sin? Nay, was there ever one mere man, from Adam downward to this hour, who fulfilled, in all its strictness and extent, the holy law of God. No, verily, not one. Yet the law is binding, and its claims are immutable. What, then, is to be done? Shall the transgressor substitute ceremonial observances in the room of moral obedience? He may attempt it, indeed; for what will man in such circumstances *not* do? But in doing so, he offers that which is comparatively base for that which is intrinsically excellent; and the Righteous Judge may well be expected to frown indignantly on the unworthy compensation. Shall, then, the blood of animals be shed in fancied expiation of acknowledged guilt. It may; but what natural right has man to make the brute creation suffer for *his* delinquencies; or (even supposing that he has), what proportion is there between the life of an irrational victim and that of an immortal soul? Shall, then, a still higher atonement be resorted to, and shall the father, in an agony of remorse for his own misdeeds, plunge the sacrificial knife into the side of a first-born? What then? Is not the guilt of former sins *aggravated*, instead of being *cancelled*, by the perpetration of a new one? and is it not obvious that, so far from bettering his condition, he but increases its horrors by thus adding iniquity to sin? Shall he, then, repent him of the past, and resolve upon obedience for the future? He may; but no penitence which he may feel can undo

what has already been done ; and, even if it could, the repentance of a sinful being is so stained by selfishness that even this would need to be repented of. Shall he, then, cast himself at once upon the Judge's mercy, and (disclaiming all pretence to merit) implore forgiveness as an act of sovereign grace ? This were, indeed, the most rational of all conceivable devices ; for God is merciful, and willeth not the death of a sinner. But there are other considerations which discourage even this hope ; for *mercy* is not the only attribute of the Divine nature. He is just, and his retributive justice must be glorified ; he is a governor, and his authority must be upheld ; he is a lawgiver, and either his laws must be obeyed, or the breach of them avenged. His truth also is pledged for the execution of punishment upon the guilty ; and how then can the sinner reasonably expect to be placed in the condition of an innocent or righteous person ? Reason and law alike forbid it. Let him multiply sacrifices to infinitude—let him inflict upon his own person the most cruel tortures—let him deny himself to every comfort and convenience—let him undertake the most toilsome and expensive pilgrimages—let him give all the substance of his house away for supposed purposes of piety—and, this being done, spend the residue of his years in voluntary mortifications—let him, in one word, put ingenuity to the torture, and do all that ingenuity thus tortured can devise ; still his unrighteousness remaineth on him, and he lies, as before, under the curse of a violated law. Wretched man that he is ! who can help him ? Not any of his fellow mortals ; for they, like him, are sinners, and can-

not ransom their own souls, far less redeem their neighbour's. Not the unfallen angels who do the will of God in heaven ; for holy and good as they are, they do nothing but what it is their duty to perform, and they have no righteousness to spare for the wretched posterity of Adam. Men, then, it is evident, neither have righteousness by nature, nor can fall on any reasonable device by which to make up for the want of it. Created beings, even of the highest order, are unable to assist them. Evil spirits *would* not help them if they *could* ; and good angels *could* not if they *would*. Whether they look to the right hand or to the left, there is no one to care for their souls.

But in the substitution of Christ for the guilty there is righteousness provided for the sinner. Thus can God be adored as just, even while he justifies the ungodly. Although by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, yet by the obedience of another many are made righteous. It is this which so broadly and gloriously distinguishes the religion of Jesus from every other under heaven. It takes men just as they are, and it offers to them what, in their hours of seriousness, they wish above all things to have. It comes to them as sinners, and proposes to them righteousness. It addresses them as guilty before God, and makes known to them how they may be reputed innocent. It offers to place them, all unrighteous as they are, in a position of sinless beings. It invites the greatest transgressor to receive that which shall not only absolve him from punishment, but entitle him to a reward. It calls upon the guilty sons of men to take that which will set them on a far

higher ground than even that which Adam occupied before his fall. Such is the perfection of his obedience, that it is available to myriads; and there is needed only the exercise of a lively faith in it to realise unto the guilty bosom the peace that passeth all understanding.

4. *It is scarcely necessary to say much in order to show that the last of those conditions which we mentioned above, as necessary to render any proposed substitution available, is clearly fulfilled in regard to the vicarious work of Christ.*—God the Father has declared to all men his acceptance of it by raising him from the dead. But for this we should have had no security that the atonement was complete, and that the justice of the Supreme Governor was satisfied. True, indeed, all nature appeared to sympathise with his dying agonies; the rending of rocks, the opening of graves, the darkening of the sun's light at noon, and other terrific accompaniments of his crucifixion, gave awful intimation of the purpose. His latest words, too, loudly proclaimed that the work which he had undertaken was finished. But had this been all, fear might still have been felt that all was not paid; and the very horrors that attended his crucifixion might have been so misinterpreted as to encourage the apprehension that some other sacrifice was yet necessary. But not so, now that he has been raised with power. To know that God the Father is well pleased with his obedience unto death, to be convinced that the offering which he made has been accepted and that it is everlastingly meritorious, to be assured that all has been rendered which law or justice could demand, we have but to look into yonder tomb where once our sub-

stitute was confined. He is not there ; and by the mighty earthquake which caused the watchmen to run off in terror, by the angels who sat in white raiment within, by these pulchral garments so carefully folded up, and by the oft-repeated visits of Jesus himself to those whom he called to be his disciples, we are taught that nothing which needed to be done for our salvation has been left undone ; that the guilt of transgression has been cancelled ; and that the condemning power of the law has ceased for ever. Who shall now lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? Let them first confine, if they can, the Lord of Glory ; let them keep under the dominion of the grave Him that is the Prince of Life.

Yes, Christian, when at any time the adversary of souls would seek to persuade you that your sins are too great to be forgiven, when conscience writes bitter things against you, and it would seem as if no man living cared for your relief, point to the empty grave of your Redeemer, and ask, Who is he that condemneth ? Rest assured that if the substitution had not been graciously accepted, Jesus would have lain to this hour and moment in the narrow house. But no : He has risen, and you may now go with confidence to the holiest of all.

Yea, more than this, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ did himself, before all worlds, devise the wondrous plan. No wonder then that his Grace accepted in time what his Wisdom had purposed in eternity. Now, therefore, may the mourners rejoice, now may the penitent be glad ; for in Him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins :—

" We have a friend, more tender, true,
Than brother e'er can be ;
Who, when all others bid adieu,
Remains the last to flee ;
Who, be their pathway bright or dim,
Deserts not those who turn to Him.
The heart by Him sustained, though deep
Its anguish, still can bear ;
The soul he condescends to keep,
Shall never know despair :
In nature's weakness, sorrow's night,
He is its strength, its joy, its light."

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

A FLOWER LOVING THE SHADE.

THE speech of Judah was enough to awaken the sympathy of a man much less tender-hearted than Joseph. Although the Governor of Egypt had borne no such intimate relation to the speaker as he actually did, he could not, if possessed of ordinary humanity, have failed to be mightily affected by it; so natural, so truthful, so beseeching was it. How, then, could JOSEPH, whose bowels already "yearned over his brethren"—who, to hide his rising emotion had, on a late occasion, retired into his own chamber that he might weep there—and to whom, as deeming him long since dead and gone, Judah had made more than one touching allusion—how could he resist its pathos? No longer could he conceal his feelings, no longer could he refrain himself before them. Enough had now been said and done to satisfy him that their penitence was sincere; and it now only remained that he should impart to them the discovery which Nature was impatient to make. Before doing so, however, he caused all, save themselves, to withdraw.

"There stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren."—Genesis xlv. 1.

Those must be blind to moral beauty indeed who can fail to admire the delicacy and propriety of Jo-

seph's behaviour on this occasion. There are some flowers so sweetly modest that they cannot bear either to be roughly handled or rashly breathed upon. Touch them, and their beauty fades; breathe upon them, and their fragrance dies. And even so it is with the finest emotions of the human heart. They neither can endure the coarse gaze of the world's eye, nor can maintain their freshness under the strange breath of foreign sympathy. Once let us apprehend that they who cannot fully enter into our emotions overhear us giving utterance to them, or observe their working, and forthwith a chill comes over them that cannot easily be done away. The heart's freedom is gone, and the play of genuine sensibility is succeeded by stiffness and formality. It is not that there is in reality aught unmanly in these affections of our nature; it is not that there is anything in the tears which Love sheds of which Reason needs to be ashamed; for, to those who can look down into the fountain whence they rise, there will always appear to be something graceful in their flow. But it is that onlookers, as we fear, may not estimate aright the position which we occupy, and are therefore imperfectly qualified to sympathise with our emotions. It is because from wanting that which we have, or from being ignorant of that which we know, they may be tempted to regard as extravagant what, if they better understood it, they would consider sober and becoming. Therefore it is that Nature is jealous of having her affections too rigidly scanned, and that she loves to rear in the shade her fairest and most precious flowers.

And here may we not confidently appeal to every heart that has known either the liveliness of affection

or the bitterness of grief? Say, ye who may have watched by the bed of the dying, or leaned over the grave of the dead, whether it be not true that it was when no man stood near you that your hearts were most completely unfettered, and that then you could give expression to thoughts and feelings which, in other circumstances, you would have deemed it unlawful for a man to utter? Was it not "when no man stood near you" that you lifted up in greatest freedom the voice of weeping and of prayer? Was it not when no man stood near you that you felt, in all its intensity, the mighty power of that love which none but yourselves could adequately comprehend; and did you not almost deprecate the approaching footstep that threatened to break in upon the sacredness of your emotion. Oh! is it not true that there are those who have gazed, as if they could never be satisfied with gazing, upon the "cold and changeless brow," and kissed, as if they could have expired in kissing, the lips beautiful in death of those most dear to them, and sat, as if they could have sat for ever, by the grave that held within it the form of departed friendship! But, if the eye of a stranger had looked on, would they not have turned instinctively aside as if these were doings and feelings with which no stranger might intermeddle? Yes, the most graceful of all tears are those which fall in secret;—the sounds of mourning are most musically sweet when lifted up in the lonely chamber "where no man is."

Thus it was on the present occasion with Joseph and his brethren. The Egyptians who stood by would have been but imperfect judges of the emotions to which he gave vent. They knew not the strange

history in which he and those men had been concerned ; and even if they had, they could have understood but partially the depth of the Governor's feelings. Indeed, had they known that by his own brethren he had been so mercilessly used, their indignation, it is possible, might not without difficulty have been restrained ; and the sons of Jacob, in addition to their own compunctious feelings, would have been made to suffer from Egyptian scorn. But, more than all, Joseph himself would have been fettered and restrained in the exercise of his affections. The free interchange of mind between himself and his brethren would have been powerfully arrested. Too many eyes being upon him, he would have said less and wept less than Nature prompted ; while they, scarce able to bear even his own presence, would have sunk in confusion to the earth before the searching gaze of the strangers. As it was, he could not merely let the flood of his own sensibilities go forth without obstruction, but could assure them of his love, and commune with them of all that was in his heart.

But, surely, if it be thus with merely human love, it may especially be expected to be thus with that love which is terminated upon Him of whom Joseph was the type. If even the affections which reciprocate between brother and brother may not be too barely exposed to the coarse inspection of a stranger, it may well be supposed that the affection of saints to their Elder Brother in heaven is yet more distrustful of profane eyes. We mean not that the heart in which this love exists should be ashamed of that which is indeed its glory, but that there should, on no account, be an ostentatious or unseasonable display of it. The

devotional feelings of sanctified hearts are intense and ardent, but their proper sphere of exercise is the closet, where, undisturbed by worldly noise and unchecked by human observation, the soul may commune freely with its God. We like not that showy religionism which courts the public gaze, any more than those showy flowers which spread out their gaudy colours to the sun, and lift their heads high above the modest but far sweeter blossoms that must be searched after before they can be seen. What of religion should be held prominently into view is the *practical* part; "the light of our works" rather than "the heat of our affections." The latter are to be nursed in solitude, or in the select society of kindred minds. To the sensual and the worldly they necessarily appear extravagant; to such as are brethren in spirit, they are the genuine expression of pure and sacred principles. They are things too holy to be given unto dogs, pearls too valuable to be cast before swine. It is for those indeed who love the Lord to speak often one to another, to be unreserved in their mutual communications, and to tell in reciprocating confidence what he has done for their souls. But if the sons of Belial are nigh at hand, let them exercise discretion; for their good will be evil spoken of, and the charge either of hypocrisy or fanaticism will be brought to their doors. It is good to have religious feeling; it may often be imprudent to display it. It is not so, however, with religious *principle*. It can never be too much exercised, it can never be too prominently exhibited. Let the *feeling* be deep, and the expression of it rare; let the *principle* be solid, and the manifestation of it constant. *Before all men*, let the one

be shown; *when no man stands near*, let the other be cherished.

We may hence take occasion to observe that, in this point, as in many others, Joseph is a proper type of Jesus.—As it was when no man stood near that Joseph made himself known to his brethren, so did Jesus manifest himself unto his own disciples in another way than he did unto the world. Unto the multitude at large he spake frequently in parables; unto *them* he made known their import. How pathetically did he speak to them beforehand of the decease that he was to accomplish at Jerusalem! How consolingly sweet the discourse which he delivered to them, and the intercessory prayer which he offered in their behalf shortly before his crucifixion! How endearing his converse with the family that he loved at Bethany! And when the hour of his awful agony in the garden of Gethsemane was at hand, whom did he take with him to witness it but those whom he had before favoured with a glimpse of celestial glory on the Mount of Transfiguration! Whose feet were they that he stooped down to wash but theirs whom he had loved from the beginning, and whom he loved unto the end! On whom was it that he cast a heart-melting and never-to-be-forgotten look but on one for whom he had prayed that, when Satan came to sift him, his faith might not fail! To whom but to Mary and John did he address from the cross where he hung in agony the affecting words, “Woman, behold thy Son,” and “Son, behold thy mother!” And when at length the third day dawned, so that he rose ~~from~~ the dead, as he had said, to whom was it that he showed himself alive? Not to the high

priests and rulers, whose enmity against him was implacable ; not to the hypocrites in Jerusalem who, on the day before, had impiously gone through a round of sacred services while He, who was the Lord of them, lay a martyr in the silent tomb ; not to Pilate, the pusillanimous judge, who, against the warnings of conscience and a direct intimation from heaven, had, at the popular outcry, iniquitously condemned him ; not to the rude soldiers who platted a crown of thorns and put it on his blessed head ; not to the bloodthirsty multitude that cried, " Away with him, let him be crucified !" No, not to these ; but to the affectionate, though timid ones, who were now scattered as sheep without a shepherd, to the pious women,

" Who, when apostles shrank, could danger brave ;
Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave ;"

to the humble penitent who had washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head ; to the two travellers, who, with sad countenances and heavy hearts, thought and spake of him ; to those, in one word, whom he was not ashamed to call his brethren—for whom he died and rose again and revived. Oh, when one by the eye of faith contemplates Him making himself known to some of them in the breaking of bread, and to others by showing them his hands and his feet ; when we view him as addressing the incredulous Thomas in these affecting words—" Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing ;" putting to the disciple who had thrice denied him the thrice

repeated question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and, finally, when we behold him on the Mount of Olives lifting up his hands to bestow a parting benediction on the eleven, whom he was to leave behind him on the earth, verily we may say—Never any brother hath felt or done like this brother.

And even, now that he occupies the highest station in the vast universe of God, he manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his own. The world at large, the unconverted world, knows him not; knows not the tenderness of his affection, the power of his sympathy, the sweetness of his consolations, the abundance of his grace; but those know all this, who, through faith in his name, become the children of God. The great Apostle of the Gentiles knew it, when he went from city to city and from land to land as an ambassador in His name, when in the jail of Philippi he sang praises to God at midnight, when he reasoned with philosophers at Athens and stood before Nero at Rome, when, even under stripes and imprisonments, amid watchings and fastings, he could say of himself—"Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, perplexed but not in despair, having nothing and yet possessing all things." The early martyrs and confessors knew it, who passed not only through the valley of death, but through the burning fires of persecution, and feared no evil. The saints of every succeeding age have known it, and the discovery has made them even to rejoice in tribulation.

Yes, my Christian reader, it may be your lot to be heavily afflicted in your person, in your circumstances, or in your friendships; the dearest of your joys may of a sudden be taken from you; you may

have cause to mourn for the dead, or, which is yet worse, to lament the misconduct of the living ; you may have to lie on a sick bed alone with none to visit you, the pillow on which your head is placed may not be eased by one gentle hand, and you may be ungratefully forsaken by those whose duty it was to perform to you the offices of love ; but with all this you may receive manifestations of Christ's tenderness ; and, while you feel acutely the selfishness of others, you will yet rejoice in the light of his countenance. The darkness of midnight will not be dismal to you when the sun of righteousness shines. The silence and gloom of the grave at which you look will not appal you, when the voice falls upon your dying ear, "Fear not to go down thither, for I will surely bring thee up again." The desertion of those in whom you trusted will not overwhelm you, when you know that there is One Brother, born for adversity, who will never leave nor forsake you.

Let, then, your intercourse with Him be frequent and habitual. In the secret exercises of meditation and prayer, pour out your hearts before Him, represent to Him your needs, and make known your requests. What things you would not that the world should know, disclose to Him with freedom. By Him your secrets shall be safely kept. You may trust Him with what you would be ashamed to reveal even to the nearest and dearest of your kindred. The sympathy of others is at the best partial and imperfect—you neither can communicate to them every distressful thought, nor get them to understand it thoroughly. But to Him you need use no disguise. You may state the matter exactly as it is ; and, rest assured that

he will make your case his own. An earthly brother's affection may be limited in its outgoings by a regard to his own welfare, and his wish to aid you may be checked by his want of power ; but it is not so with your Elder Brother, who is able as he is willing to serve you to the uttermost. In Him all fulness dwells, and he is more ready to hear than you can be to pray. Draw near, then, unto Him as unto a merciful and faithful High Priest, and, for your encouragement, remember his most gracious word. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The elegant and accomplished author of "The Christian Year," has made a happy application of this beautiful circumstance in the history of Joseph, in the following exquisite little poem :—

"When Nature tries her finest touch,
Weaving her vernal wreath,
Mark ye, how close she veils her round,
Not to be trac'd by sight or sound,
Nor soil'd by ruder breath.
Who ever saw the earliest rose
First open her sweet breast ?
Or, when the summer sun goes down,
The first soft star in evening's crown
Light up her gleaming crest ?
But there's a sweeter flower than e'er
Blush'd on the rosy spray—
A brighter star, a richer bloom,
Than e'er did western heaven illume
At close of summer day.
'Tis Love, the last best gift of Heaven ;
Love, gentle, holy, pure :
But, tenderer than a dove's soft eye,
The scorching sun, the open sky,
She never could endure.

Even human love will shrink from sight
Here on the coarse rude earth :
How, then, should rash intruding glance
Break in upon *her* sacred trance,
Who boasts a heavenly birth ?
So still and secret is her growth,
Ever the truest heart,
Where deepest strikes her kindly root,
For hope or joy, for flower or fruit,
Least knows its happy part.
God only and good angels look
Behind the blissful screen ;
As when, triumphant o'er his woes,
The Son of God by moonlight rose ;
By all but Heaven unseen :
As when the Holy Maid beheld
Her risen Son and Lord :
Thought has not colours half so fair
That she to paint that hour may dare,
In silence best ador'd.
The gracious dove, that brought from Heaven
The earnest of our bliss,
Of many a chosen witness telling,
On many a happy vision dwelling,
Sings not a note of this.
So, truest image of the Christ,
Old Israel's long-lost son,
What time, with sweet forgiving cheer,
He call'd his conscious brethren near—
Would weep with them alone.
He could not trust his melting soul,
But in his Maker's sight :
Then why should gentle hearts and true
Bare to the rude world's withering view
Their treasure of delight !
No—let the dainty rose awhile
Her bashful fragrance hide—
Rend not her silken veil too soon,
But leave her in her own soft noon,
To flourish and abide."

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

JOSEPH MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN.

WE may easily enough conceive the astonishment and fear which possessed the minds of Joseph's brethren, when the simple, but heart-touching words, "I am Joseph," fell from him. No wonder that they could not answer him—no wonder that they were troubled at his presence. Was it possible? and, if possible, how could it be accounted for? We may well suppose that they looked unutterable things, and that their countenances were expressive now of shame, now of remorse, now of amazement, now of terror. It was, indeed, an eventful moment, a surprising revelation; and, no doubt, when they found heart at length to turn on him their half-fixed eyes, they would scan, with all the earnestness of awakened feeling, those features which, though changed by years and thought, were still, as to their cast and outline, the same as they had looked upon forty years before in the vale of Hebron. How strange, they might think, was it that they had not recognised him ere now; and how very senseless they must have thought themselves for not knowing, even in the robes of Egyptian splendour, their long-lost brother! Those who have ever witnessed the first meeting of long-separated friends, must have noticed that the one whose memory served him not, did, as soon as the announcement was made

to him, reproach himself severely for his own stupidity, as to him it seemed ; that he *then* saw in every lineament a something which ought at the very first to have suggested the discovery ; and that he was confounded with his own bluntness of perception. Thus, too, it might be with Joseph's brethren. That face, altered as it was, could they not have remembered it, or fancied, at least, that it bore some likeness to one which they had known familiarly in former years ? That eye, so significant of deep and comprehensive mind, had they seen nothing like it in the brother whose superiority of genius awakened their envy ? That voice, which gave utterance to the tones of a foreign tongue, could they not have discovered in it some similarity to that which had once pleaded beseechingly for mercy from them, but in vain ? Yes, doubtless, the heart felt all this, though the mouth said it not ; and they must have deemed themselves slow indeed in failing to arrive at a conclusion which, when made to them by another, seemed obvious enough.

This, however, was the most tolerable part of their confusion ; for, if they had been free of guilt in regard to him, the revelation would have been joyful indeed. Had they had nothing of cruelty with which to charge themselves, surprise would have been followed by intense gladness of heart. But here, alas ! was one whom they had most injuriously treated, whose finest affections they had trampled upon, whose cries they had disregarded, and whose life they had all but taken. Now, therefore, might conscience write bitter things against them, and the words, "I am Joseph," pierce them to the quick. We all know

with what reluctance the eye looks upon any thing which suggests painful remembrances. The man who has deeply wronged another, will go miles out of his way rather than meet him. How often has the mention of an abused name aroused the horror of a dying sinner ! Rather than hear it he would be crushed in atoms to the earth ; rather than look upon the memorial, however simple, of his misdeeds, he would be dispossessed of reason and intelligence. And, now that Joseph's brethren were unexpectedly in his presence, they must have vividly recollected all the circumstances of the past, and wished rather that they had never been born. The short sentence, "I am Joseph," must have been to them as if he had said, "I am he whom you conspired to murder, and against whom, even from my boyhood, you plotted mischief. Think how you behaved towards me in my father's house. I am he, whose words you ridiculed, and whose intimations of future greatness you laughed to scorn. You see now how they have been brought to pass. I am that very brother whom, when I came to visit you in Shechem, you determined foully to get rid of. Do you not remember the pit into which, weary and thirsty as I was, you cast me, and of your then sitting down, as if you had done nothing amiss, to eat bread by yourselves. Have you forgotten how earnestly and affectingly I pleaded with you for my life, and how unheeding you were to all my remonstrances ? And, when at length by the good providence of God I was delivered from perishing by your hands, did you not basely accept of money as my price, and go back to a weeping and wondering father with a lie upon your right hands ? Behold in

me the brother against whom you long ago so awfully sinned. Behold in me the living historian of your black and complicated crimes !”

These and many similar ideas were those few words, “I am Joseph,” eminently fitted to suggest. And doubtless his brethren were in that trying hour painfully alive to them.

Another overwhelming consideration would be that the discovery of their guilt was now complete. Hitherto the secret had been locked up in their own bosoms ; but now there was no possibility of concealing it any longer. And what a disgraceful history it was ! Their father, too, from whom they had so long hidden it, would come to the knowledge of it at last ; and what could they say for themselves ? In Egypt and in Canaan alike, they would be objects of aversion. Their names would go down to posterity with odium, and wherever Joseph was spoken of with approbation, they would be denounced and scorned. Yet would the words “I am Joseph” also awaken some *hope* within them. He had been always gentle, and he was still known in the land over which he presided as a person of moderation. Had his designs towards them been unfriendly, would he not have carried his first rough treatment of them more fully out ? Having got them the second time into his power, would he not have exercised unmingled resentment ? Above all, would he now have sent every one else away and wept so affectingly before them ? There was at least something about the words themselves, and the person who spoke them, that might serve as a ray of hope to lighten up the tempest of darker emotions. And they would be the more assured

when at length he said, "*Come near to me, I pray you.*"

Altogether, it was a most tender interview ; and they must be slow of heart indeed who cannot feel its pathos. Perhaps, however, there is a time coming when something similar to it shall be experienced by us all. Only suppose that through faith and repentance we are at length prepared for admission by death into the assembly of the just, and that those have gone thither before us who, although not so treated by us as Joseph was by his brethren, were yet less esteemed by us than they deserved to be. A far greater change, doubtless, has taken place on *them* than was wrought on Joseph during his lengthened separation from a father's house ; and it is possible, at least, that when we are translated into the world of spirits, we shall wonder who those are whom once we knew most intimately. The brightness of the robes with which they are invested, and the glorious model after which their substances are fashioned, may be such as to forbid the thought that these are they who once had their foundation in the dust, and wore the garments of corruption. They may speak to us, and we not for a while imagine that theirs were once familiar voices. It may be that to the new visitant there may be much to awaken astonishment, while there is little to revive remembrance. It may be, too, that just as much of tender emotion as consists with the perfect happiness which is there enjoyed, may be felt by the kindred spirit when addressed in terms such as these :—" I am the father or the brother, the husband or the wife, the son or the daughter, whose memory thou didst at one time promise to hold for ever sacred. Hast thou for-

gotten me thus soon, or is there nothing in this my countenance and form that should remind thee of the aspect which then I wore?" Yes, it is conceivable that revelations of this sort may give rise for an instant to such tender sorrow as is not consistent with heavenly joy, and that, with the ineffable happiness of recognition, there may be blended some soft regrets that the dead, whom we held so dear, were, sooner than was meet, forgotten by us. And we may conceive, too, if the sympathies which obtain in heaven have any analogy to those that hold on earth, how eagerly we shall compare the reality before us with the bygone remembrance, and how we shall please ourselves to recognise in the superinduced change the beautiful and indelible marks of underlaid identity.

We may conceive, too, with what horror the impenitent and unbelieving shall hear fall upon their ears the awful sentence, "I am Jesus"—as if it were to say, I am He, whose name and character you despised, whose grace you scorned, whose blood you trampled on, and whom you daily crucified afresh. With what face shall *they* look upon their redeemed and happy kindred, who set at nought all the solemn counsels which they gave them, wounded their best feelings, and hastened their departure hence? How, on that day when no man can redeem his brother, shall the libertine look on the once happy maid whom he seduced from purity, and with what heart hear from her the intimation, Thou didst help to ruin my soul.

It were easy to multiply conjectures on a field so copious as this. But we forbear, lest we should seem to pronounce as certain what we only speak of as possible. It may be that such analogies are altogether

fanciful, or it may be that they are even capable of being more widely stretched. Assuredly, "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy." We dismiss them, therefore, as peradventures ; for we know that it is neither safe nor proper to seek to be wise above that which is written. Yet believing, as we hold ourselves entitled to do, that there shall be a mutual recognition of saints in bliss, we may be allowed to doubt whether that recognition shall be immediate, and whether it does not better consist with all that we know of humanity to suppose that a series of conversations may take place ; that questions may be asked and answers given ; that experiments may be made to awaken in the newly-arrived spirit bygone reminiscences, ere the discovery shall be made in all its fullness that it is talking face to face with its own familiar friend. The surprise in that case may be conceived to add to the joy. And, perhaps, too, the fresh intelligence which the new visitant can give of the world which it has left, and of the welfare of common friends, may occasion enlargement of gladness to those who were happy before. Should such, indeed, be the case, with what interest will the already redeemed hear of their survivors' worth—with what angelic delight receive assurance that those for whom, while yet with them, they prayed affectionately, still walk in the footsteps of the flock, and keep themselves unspotted from the world ! That countenance so celestially bright—that hand striking now a golden harp in concert with unfallen angels—can they, indeed, be those of the infant over whose grave Rachel sat often weeping in bitterness of soul ? Can it be that yonder is the once feeble and tottering

frame of the venerable old man, now excelling in strength and crowned with immortality. The glance of celestial affection must be quick indeed ; and they who have long stood before the throne of God and the Lamb may well be supposed capable of making easier discoveries than those who have only left the region of imperfection and sin.

The piety of Joseph, again, appears to singular advantage at this point of the history. He calls the attention of his brethren to the fact that the hand of Providence had brought all this about. Not that they were free of guilt in the matter : but that He who makes the wrath of man to praise him had turned their evil intentions to a happy issue, both as concerned Joseph himself, his father's house, the land of Egypt, and the world at large. It is thus, too, that the mind which has become wise unto salvation is led to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in bringing so many incalculable benefits to the human race from the greatest of all conceivable sins—the murder of the holy child Jesus. The son of man went as it had been written concerning him ; and better far it had been for the traitor that he had never been born. Yet from this unparalleled iniquity has God caused mercy and peace to flow to myriads. The evil of the sin is not the less apparent, because of the wonderful manner in which the designs of it were overruled. It is for us, then, often as we contemplate the death of Jesus, to adore the wisdom of that God who permitted the rulers to take counsel together, and the people to imagine a vain thing, in order that he might take the wise in their own craftiness, and establish a covenant of mercy with many nations.

Joseph having made himself known to his brethren interchanges with them tokens of reconciliation. "He kissed his brethren, and wept upon them; after that his brethren talked with him." Their hearts were encouraged and their fears put to flight. With Pharaoh's concurrence, he invites them and their little ones from Canaan to Egypt; he charges them with a message to the parent who had mourned for him so long; gives them provision for the journey, and dismisses them with the important caution—"See that ye fall not out by the way."

It is thus that our Elder Brother deals with those who are reconciled by his blood. The fears of natural conscience are removed, they are admitted into communion with him, he makes provision for their necessities, chooses out the lot of their inheritance, and commands them, as his friends and brethren, to live peaceably as heirs together of the grace of life.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

UNEXPECTED NEWS. JACOB IS TOLD THAT JOSEPH
IS YET ALIVE AND GOVERNOR OF EGYPT.

“ And Jacob's heart fainted ; for he believed them not.”—*Gen.* xlv. 26.

GLAD tidings are sometimes as overpowering as those of an opposite description. How often has it happened that the sudden re-appearance of one whom for years they had given up as lost has thrown an affectionate family into a flood of emotion, from which it required both time and consideration to deliver them. Surprise has always about it a certain “ touch of unbelief ;” and just as we can scarce bring ourselves to believe that a person whom we knew very intimately, and whom we saw in the full enjoyment of health a few hours before, is actually dead, so we have like difficulty in crediting either our own senses or the testimony of others in regard to the living welfare of those whom for years we have lamented as gone. Those can well enough understand what we mean who have had friends either at sea or in foreign lands, from whom, for many a recurring season, no communication arrived, and in regard to whom all inquiries were unsuccessful. They can tell what it is to endure the torments of suspense, and the agitations of uncertainty ; how, as every successive month passed by, expectation

became more languid, and there remained only enough of

“Hope to keep alive despair;”

and how, at length, even this gave way, and the mind sank into the sad conclusion, that the worst which it had at first apprehended must, beyond all doubt, have taken place. They, too, can say with what a strange mixture of gladness and incredulity they received, in an unlooked for hour, a letter from the very friend they had so long deplored ; with what anxiety, bordering on suspicion, they examined the handwriting ; and how hard they were, even after perusing its contents, to be persuaded that the thing was not altogether a dream ! It is for them, then, and such as them, to understand how the tidings of Joseph's welfare affected the father, who had now, for more than thirty years, lamented him as one departed from the earth. Could it be that Joseph was indeed alive ? Had not all the versimilitudes of the case been such as to produce in his mind a firm and reasonable belief that he had been devoured by some evil beast in the wilderness ? Besides, if Joseph had indeed been alive, would he not have taken care at the earliest opportunity to remove an affectionate father's apprehensions ? Was it at all likely that he would have let so much time elapse without acquainting him of his life and fortunes ? Surely he would not have let one so deeply and tenderly interested in him go down mourning to the grave ?

We wonder not, therefore, to read that Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. Another very

affecting instance of this sort we find recorded in the Gospel of St Luke. There we are told that, when Jesus after his resurrection stood in the midst of his disciples, conversed with them, and showed them "his wounds, *they yet believed not for joy.*" The thing was indisputable; all the evidence that could possibly be wished for was given; and yet there was a something within them which tempted them to distrust the fact. Deeming it, as we say, too good news to be true, they believed not for joy. The working of the same feeling may be discerned in the following passage:—

"And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel."—Acts xii. 13, &c.

We may hence take occasion to remark generally, that, according as faith is strong or weak, the heart of a person is supported or sinks under any bright discovery of God's truth. What, after all, were the news of Joseph's existence, compared with the high announcements made to us in the gospel of Christ? It was wonderful indeed that Israel's long-lost son should have been actually alive, and that he was Governor over all the land of Egypt; but the realities of the heavenly world are infinitely more astonishing. Let one but read the account which St Paul gives to the Corinthians of his rapture into the third heavens, where he beheld things which it was not lawful for a man to utter, and then say whether it be not true that

a strong exercise of *faith* is necessary ere the *hope* can be entertained that we, if sanctified by the grace of the gospel, shall be made partakers of so glorious a felicity. David tells us that he would have *fainted* if he had *not believed*; and it consists with the experience of every saint, that in direct proportion to the strength of this grace is his ability either to act or to suffer. When is it that poverty is most meekly endured, that sickness is most patiently borne, or that bereavement is most submissively acquiesced in? Is it not when the sufferer's belief in the power and providence of God is such as to enable him to look beyond that which is immediate and visible to that which is remote and unseen? What but a persuasion that there is a better world on the other side of this can keep the dying man's heart from sinking, or the mourner's feet from falling? Had Jacob but considered that with God all things are possible, he would not then have fainted at the good news which his children brought to him from Egypt. It is the province of faith to believe, upon the force of divine testimony, what to flesh and blood would seem incredible. Let a man but possess this in lively exercise, not only will he be kept from fainting, but made to hope even against hope. Had Christ's disciples believed the words which he spake unto them, they would not have been alarmed when they beheld him after his resurrection from the dead; and did men in these times but believe firmly that, to those who are redeemed by his blood, death is but a passage to glory, they would not be unduly disquieted under the visitations of his hand.

The spirit of Jacob, however, at length revived.

The words of Joseph, on being told over to him, assured his mind ; and, more than all, those waggons which had been sent to convey him and his effects to Egypt put the matter beyond a doubt. " Then Israel said, It is enough : Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die."

Here, then, let us be taught that, when at any time *our* faith is apt to fail, it will be well for us to remember the words of Jesus. Are we sad in spirit, and in heaviness through manifold afflictions ? Let us call to mind those discourses of our Lord in which he comforted his disciples and dismissed their fears. Are we at any time doubtful of his gracious designs towards us ? Let us muse on such sayings as these : " A woman, when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more her anguish for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now, therefore, have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. These things I have spoken unto you, that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When our beloved friends are removed from us by death, and we find that in regard to this world they are as if they had not been, let us consider that, if they have lived a life of faith, they are still alive and blessed. When we look merely at the pale countenance, the rigid features, the motionless hand and the senseless body, it is natural for us to ask, Where now is the spirit that once animated the frame ? In such circumstances as these, it is good to remember the words of Jesus, " I am the Resurrection and the

Life ; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." When we are ourselves laid on a dying bed, let the words of Jesus be gratefully remembered by us. If they are, as the outward man decays, the inward man shall be strengthened. True, the valley through which we have to pass is dark and gloomy ; the waters which we have to cross are proud and deep ; living friends cannot accompany us, nor can one mortal eye mark our landing. But the words of Jesus, if we remember and believe them, shall suffice to uphold our courage ; for he hath said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life ; and they shall never perish ; neither shall any be able to pluck them out of my hand." Yea more, death itself will be viewed by us as a waggon which He has sent to convey us to His immediate presence. Knowing and believing that He has prepared it, we shall not hesitate to enter ; His own gracious hand has "paved it with love." When its wheels move slowly on, we shall even wish, rather, that their power of motion was increased ; and at every successive stage of our journey we shall have cause to rejoice that we are so much nearer to our heavenly Father's arms.

Observe here, too, the comfortable familiarity with which a good man can speak of his own death ; "I will go down," says Jacob, "and see my son Joseph before I die." Jacob was now a hundred and thirty years old ; many changes he had seen, many trials he had undergone ; but he knew well that bounds were appointed to the years of man, and that of him as well as of others the sentence had been written, "dust to dust." He naturally, no doubt, had the same horror at death that other men have ; he

knew it to be attended with many a circumstance of misery and dishonour ; but he had religion enough to make him think and speak calmly of it notwithstanding. Unlike those who cannot bear to think themselves mortal, and who take it ill to be reminded that they are so, he lays his account with dying, and that soon. Some who even call themselves Christians are so immoderately attached to life, that they are most reluctant even to make a will in regard to their effects ; as if, forsooth, the doing so were to hasten their departure hence, they hear counsel to this effect with impatience, and dismiss it with all speed from their minds. Yea, some there even are who dislike to hear from the pulpit a discourse upon death, and to whom every allusion of this nature is distasteful in the extreme. With the Patriarch it was not so. Of his departure he speaks almost rejoicingly. To see Joseph in the end of his days, was indeed an event worth bearing the infirmities of age for. "I will go down and see him before I die." Thus, too, the aged Simeon, who had so long waited for the consolation of Israel, on taking into his arms the infant Saviour, could exclaim, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

JACOB AND HIS DESCENDANTS GO DOWN INTO EGYPT.

ENCOURAGED by a vision which he had beheld in the night season, Jacob rose up from Beersheba, and prosecuted his journey towards Egypt. We may suppose that by the way his mind was much occupied with devout reflections on the goodness and power of that God who had so singularly disappointed his fears, and made his last days happier than his first. That was altogether a most interesting company. An old man with children and children's children going down into a foreign land, a whole society transferring themselves with all their effects to a region comparatively unknown to them! These are at all times affecting circumstances, and seldom has the genius of poetry been more pathetically employed than in describing the varied feelings of hope and apprehension with which the industrious families that once constituted the flower of a country's population bid adieu to their native soil. Old age is not naturally enterprising; rather would it endure some present grievances, than encounter perils to have them redressed. A very strong motive, indeed, must be brought to bear upon the mind before it can contentedly forego the ease congenial to its state. To see, then, a gray-haired man, a hundred and thirty years old, undertaking and

prosecuting a journey from Canaan to Egypt, and with him his sons, and his sons' sons, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, was enough to awaken in any bosom sentiments of the deepest respect and veneration. But trying to the Patriarch as it must have been to leave Canaan, it was enough to sustain him that Joseph, his long lost son, had sent for him to Egypt, and that the God of his own father Isaac had promised to accompany him. What matters it, then, though we with our families must leave the abodes of the living, when our Redeemer is ready to welcome our arrival to the land in which he dwells, and, the God of our fathers has said, "Fear not, for I am with you."

We may not attempt to describe the meeting between Jacob and his illustrious son. For the inspired penman has only told us that "Joseph fell upon his father's neck, and wept on it a good while." Only we may easily enough suppose that the heart felt far more than the tongue could utter, and that all Joseph's trials would then be lightly esteemed by him. That hour of restoration to the parent from whom he had so long been separated, would more than compensate him for all the hardships he had borne since the day when he went to seek his brethren. Who, then, shall pretend to guess the joy with which the soul shall be possessed when, the gates of death being once passed, it is restored to the holy embrace of those for whose departure it had deeply grieved, and over whose grave it had shed the tears of what seemed irremediable sorrow! Then will all its cares and bygone sufferings be regarded as things of nought, or remembered only as waters that have passed away.

Joy is never so lively as when preceded by sorrow, as the evening sky never looks so beautiful as when the clouds that darkened the noonday heaven have melted at length away, and the deep voice of thunder has been followed by the stillness of renovated nature. Once let us be readmitted into the society of those whom we esteemed here, but whom, when we again behold them, we shall see incomparably greater cause to love, and it will seem to us as if our heaviest griefs were lighter than the dust of the balance. What cares the mariner for the storms that he has had to encounter, when he gains at length the haven of rest? Does not the traveller forget all the hardships of his journey when he reaches at last the home which terminates it? And may we not believe that when the living again join the dead the comfort of reunion shall immeasurably surpass, in point of intensity, the bitterness of separation. It must, it must indeed. Just, too, as Jacob would then acknowledge his mistake in lamenting as lost the son who was alive in honour, so shall we understand our error in weeping inconsolably over the remains of those who are not only living but reigning in glory. While Jacob deemed Joseph irrevocably gone, the latter was high in place and preferment, and his temporary absence was good for both; so they, too, whose decease we bemoan, if they died in the Lord, are happier far than we could make them; and it is good both for themselves and us that they are seen no more.

“ Oh! when a mother meets on high
The babe she lost in infancy,
Hath she not then for all her fears,
The day of wee, the watchful night,
For all her sorrow, all her tears,
An overpayment of delight.”

More had now been witnessed by the Patriarch than he had presumed to hope. Now, therefore, he thought that he could die in peace. Many an aged parent has expressed himself in similar terms when all that he cared for on earth was unexpectedly realised, and he was privileged to look once more upon the child from whom by time and distance he had been long divided. And although Jacob had still seventeen years more to spend on earth, he was now so reconciled to the Divine will that he could contentedly die at any time. The immediate hand of God in the whole matter he could now easily discern, and even as the aged Simeon, who had long waited for the redemption of Israel, could, in taking into his arms the heaven-born babe of Bethlehem, expire without regret, so Jacob, his wishes in regard to Joseph being far more than gratified, says, not in a fit of peevishness, but in the exercise of holy resignation, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

The tender interview with his venerable parent being over, Joseph instructed his brethren how to conduct themselves before Pharaoh. He goes, this being done, to inform that sovereign that his kindred had come down into his realms. Odious as the name of shepherd was to the Egyptians, they were not to disguise the fact that such had been their calling and occupation. It would have been very easy for Joseph to represent his brethren as persons of honourable descent; for so, in truth, they were. Their ancestor Abraham had been possessed of great riches, and his name was famous in the East. He had not only been honourably distinguished all his life-long for piety

and domestic virtue, but on one particular occasion also for valour in the field ; and had Joseph desired to attach value to descent, no more noble name could have been selected by him than that of him who had so bravely acquitted himself in the vale of Siddim. He might have spoken of Isaac, in like manner, as one whose friendship was courted by Abimelech, and to whom that Prince had sent ambassadors for the ratification of an amicable covenant. He might even have gone over the history of his own father, Jacob, and drawn from it materials enough to show that they were highly and honourably connected. But Joseph, with all his rank and with all his dignity of extraction, was not a vain man. These things, he well knew, did not constitute greatness ; and as it was his object to glorify God's Providence more than to honour either himself or his friends, he declares, with all honesty and singleness of heart, that the men's trade had been about cattle from their youth even until then. He was neither, in short, himself ashamed of his brethren's occupation, nor did he wish them to be ashamed of it. Why should he ? It was lawful and innocent in itself ; and although, from political causes which it is not necessary here to specify, it had been much hated by the Egyptians, that was no reason why the truth should not be told.

Let the conduct of Joseph, then, serve as a rebuke to those who, having themselves risen from obscurity to power and opulence, are ashamed of the humble condition in which, at one period of their lives, they were placed. How often has it happened that such persons have disclaimed all knowledge of their acquaintances and bosom friends ; have shunned, as

they would shun a mortal infection, the playfellows of their youth ; have denied their countenance to the persons who could attest their original poverty ; and have been uneasy under the most distant allusion to the trade or calling which once they followed ? The meanness of their character is best seen by contrasting it with the nobleness of Joseph's. Poor notwithstanding all their wealth, and vile with all their dignity, they are as unlike the illustrious Governor of Egypt as it is possible to imagine. Did they possess true magnanimity, they would, instead of seeking to hide or disguise, esteem it a high honour to declare what they had been. They would hold nothing to be discreditable but sin ; and, if their greatness was acquired in a just and innocent way, they would speak often of their original poverty as an encouragement to others in a low estate. Instead of despising their poor relatives, they would extend to them every countenance befitting their moral character. Instead of feeling sensitive under any allusion to their past history, they would take occasion from it to recommend to others the industrious habits by which they had themselves been enabled to attain eminence. This were to show themselves not altogether unworthy of the elevation to which they had been raised. This were to prove that their minds were yet greater than their fortunes. But surely when men so far forget what true dignity is, as to feel shame or uneasiness at that which would remind them of the obscurity whence they emerged, they who knew their history may well be excused for holding them in less estimation than the beggar on the highway, who has not where to lay his head.

Nor is the conduct of Joseph less eloquent of rebuke to those who attach more value to nobility of descent than to personal virtue. It is more truly honourable to raise a name than to inherit one—to make one's self illustrious by exemplary deeds, than faintly to reflect the light of bygone grandeur. What would it have availed Joseph that the fame of his ancestors was great and widely spread, if he himself had been wanting in the qualities for which alone they deserved to be remembered? Although the blood of Abraham flowed in his veins, was he not as a human being, in the judgment of every right-thinking person, to stand or fall upon his own character? And was he not greater far when he lay in a dungeon for righteousness sake, than if, affecting to prize his relationship to the dead, he had yet transgressed the rules which that righteous man recommended to the practice of his descendants? Throughout all generations the maxim holds good, that a man is nothing but what his own virtues or vices make him. "Estates, degrees, and offices," may all of them "be corruptly derived." There is an honour which heraldry cannot prove, nor sovereigns confer. It is that which a man's own exertions win, and upon which alone Heaven stamps the seal of its approval.

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. We mean not that it is either wrong in itself, or unworthy of a virtuous man, to take pleasure in remembering the well-earned honours of his forefathers. Far from it. There is much of generous emulation that may be roused by such memories. Indeed, it is as natural to rejoice in ancestral renown as to desire posthumous fame. What we mean is, that the mere

inheritance of splendid titles, handed down through a long line of progenitors, will not constitute greatness, and that the possessor of them would do well to consider that, should he degenerate from the virtue of his forefathers, *their* name is less an honour than a reproach to him. For surely, if marks of distinction were justly conferred on them for what they did, he who continues to wear them plainly declares himself unworthy of them, if he has forfeited the character in consideration of which they were given. Or if, on the contrary, they were bestowed unjustly at the first by the favour of a profligate court, or in return for efforts too successfully made in the cause of despotism, it were more noble to renounce than to enjoy them. Having been discredibly obtained, they cannot be honourably worn. At all events, it were well at least to wipe away the disgrace by such deeds of private and public virtue, as should not in the estimation of right thinking men, render the dignity contemptible. Nothing is more gravely ludicrous than to hear persons who, if they moved in an humble sphere of life, would be disrespected by all their fellows, boast of a noble lineage which their vices have disgraced, and of a name the glory of which they have not only not maintained, but positively tarnished. Verily, if the mighty dead could be supposed to frown upon their mean survivors, such vanity might well provoke their scorn ; for it is, indeed, of all insults upon their memory the most gross and unjustifiable. A certain wise king is reported to have said of a profligate nobleman, boasting of his ancestry, " It is then the more unfortunate that the coronet worn by so many good men should have descended at last to thee."

It is worthy of observation, too, that Joseph had a care to keep his brethren separated from the Egyptians. They were to dwell by themselves in the land of Goshen; they were to be a peculiar people to Jehovah; they were to keep alive faith in a coming Redeemer, and to maintain the purity of divine worship when other nations were immersed in idolatry and superstition. By their separation from the Egyptians, other and more immediate ends besides these, however, were promoted. They were kept at a greater distance from the idolatrous usages of that people, and were thus the less likely to be seduced by their immoralities. That land of Goshen was to be the particular spot in the world where, for four hundred years, the principles of religion were to be held in their purity; and where, when all other nations had fallen into gross errors, the worship of the one living and true God was to be celebrated without the admixture of superstition. It is thus, too, that the people of God are, in every age, a people by themselves. They do not, it is true, inhabit any special region, between which and the ungodly world a visible boundary-line is drawn; for they are now "everywhere scattered abroad." But in a far more important sense "they dwell alone." They have different interests, different affections, and different views from those in whose hearts the fear of God is not established. Even when they find it necessary, in transacting the business of life, to mingle with such, it is easily seen that they are men of another spirit. While the worldly-minded have their portion in this life, their conversation is in heaven. Like the Israelites who came not to settle, but only to sojourn in Egypt, they regard themselves as strangers and pilgrims. To hold

unnecessary intercourse with those who regard this as their rest would be to esteem less highly than they ought the heavenly land. Here they may pitch their tabernacles, but not erect permanent habitations. As neither their practices accord with those of the profane world, nor their views are terminated on the same object, it is their satisfaction to know that there remaineth a rest for the people of God.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

A FATHER'S DEATH-BED.

O, true and fervent are the prayers that breathe
Forth from a lip that fades with coming death.

THERE is much instruction to be gained at a death-bed. Although we should be connected with the dying by no tie save that of common humanity and neighbourhood, it would be good for us to go into the chamber of affliction, to understand how frail we are. That is the place either for our giving consolation to others, or for our receiving counsel from them. It is not wise to neglect such an opportunity either (if we have religious experience ourselves) for comforting the feeble-minded, or (if we are but babes in grace) for having our principles strengthened by the instructions which they are qualified to render. The thoughtless have sometimes been thus aroused to seriousness, and the vicious moved to consideration. But while every dying bed has its own eloquent lesson to tell, it is especially moving to stand by that of those to whom, by the bonds of nature and friendship, we have been long attached. *Their* last moments are full of interest to us, and, with God's blessing, we may derive great benefit from looking on. To hear of a venerable parent's illness, and feel no anxiety to visit him, would be at once an anomaly in nature and an outrage upon all religious feeling. To be near those, at the time of

their dissolution, who watched and toiled for us in other days—to minister, as best we can, to their necessities—to ease, so far as may be, their pains—to address to them the consolations of religion, and to receive their blessing—are exercises which affection as well as duty prompts us to engage in. It is at once a lovely and affecting spectacle: that of youth or beauty sitting by the couch of age, and applying to a parent's heart that precious balm, which, having virtue in itself to heal every spiritual wound, is yet felt to be doubly mollifying when administered by the gentle hand of love.

Thus, true to the dictates alike of nature and of piety, Joseph, when told that his father had fallen sick, forthwith goes to visit him, and takes with him besides his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Although great alike in wealth and in power, he would not that his children should be so dazzled by the splendours of a court as to forget that they were mortal creatures. He knew that there was much to call away their thoughts from the contemplation of death and eternity, and he exercised, therefore, his accustomed discretion in bringing them with him to the old man's death-bed. It were well if the great ones of the earth did more habituate their offspring to the contemplation of such scenes. Then might their natural selfishness be changed into mercy, and their natural levity into becoming thoughtfulness. It is because the visitations of the wealthy are more rare than they should be to the dwellings of affliction, that pride and its kindred passions so much characterise them. How would it tend to rebuke and subdue every such feeling, did they frequently view their own

mortality in the glass of other men's experience ! Would the world with its gaieties appear half so attractive on their leaving the chamber in which the frame is tossed to and fro in agony, and where death's varied harbingers seem with one voice to cry, This is the end of all ? The sons of Joseph, we doubt not, received impressions on that occasion which would not speedily be effaced ; and, long after Jacob was buried would they have cause to say that it was good for them to be there. That was, indeed, a very solemn and interesting occasion. The grandfather, who had now lived seventeen years in Egypt, and under whose eye they had grown up to manhood, was now about to go the way of all the earth, and soon they would cease to hear his once familiar voice. Who can doubt that often, as old men are won't, he had recounted to them the particulars of his history ; that he had, so to say, linked them with the very dead ; and that, by the aid of his descriptions, they had lived in imagination and feeling with the patriarchs of a former age. An old man is always most eloquent in regard to the occurrences of his early life ; and they who have passed much of their childhood in the company of the aged can best tell what the potency of that charm is which binds together the generation that is rising up with that which is all but gone. So, probably, had it been with Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob's grandchildren. Having seen so much, and having come through so much, he could never lack materials wherewith to entertain them ; and, although not more intense, yet almost more lively and playful would be their affection for him than that which they cherished for their illustrious parent. But now his eye was waxing dim,

and his departure was at hand. "THE TIME DREW NEAR WHEN ISRAEL MUST DIE." Prudently, therefore, as well as piously, did Joseph take them along with him to the mortal chamber.

Having heard that Joseph was come, "Israel strengthened himself upon the bed."—It is in the time of its deep affliction that a generous heart is most alive to kindness. The friendly offices which at other times may have been more lightly esteemed, are then highly valued. Every little attention is prized, as every appearance of neglect is felt to be acutely harassing. It must doubtless have been a very high gratification to Jacob to find himself thus visited, in his hours of serious indisposition, by his illustrious son. Nor is the aged man's behaviour on the occasion without its practical use. We may learn from it that it is proper for the sick and afflicted to be as cheerful as they possibly can when friends or relatives come to visit them. Not only was Jacob patient under his last illness ; but, so far as nature would allow, he was agreeable and courteous. *He strengthened himself*; that is to say, he did what he could to receive Joseph comfortably. Instead of either showing a sullen disposition or exaggerating his ailments, he appeared to forget them for a time, that he might the more freely enjoy conversation with his beloved son. The frame was indeed feeble, but the spirit was good ; the constitution was breaking down, but the mind was quite entire ; and so reconciled was he to his condition, that, instead of falling into any fit of peevishness because he must so soon leave the world, he took occasion, while yet in it, to make those about him as contented and happy as possible.

My readers may have perhaps witnessed such a death-bed as this. It may have been your lot to see old age bearing itself well under the load of its infirmities ; delicately afraid to give unnecessary trouble ; pleased, in a manner, with everything ; thankful for every attention shown to it, and turning even from its own ills to soothe and comfort the griefs of others. It may have been your fortune, also, to witness the exhibition of a very different temper ; to see every kindness insensibly met, and every sacrifice ungratefully requited, the mind more fretful than the body was pained, and the unhappy man taking the opportunity, when a stranger entered, of magnifying, or at least, if not magnifying, of giving full expression to all his troubles. What a disparity in point of enjoyment, both as regards the person himself and others ! How satisfying and satisfied the one—how sad and saddening the other ! We will not go so far as to assert that there can be no religion at all in the second case ; for certain allowance must be made for natural temperament and constitution ; but this we may freely say, that its exhibition (if it does exist) is far less amiable than in the first ; and as in every stage of life it is the duty of men to adorn the doctrine of godliness, it ought now to be our prayer and our determination, through grace, that, when sickness is sent upon us, we may endure it not only with patience of mind, but with cheerfulness of temper.

The discourse of Jacob is made up partly of remembrances, and partly of anticipations ; (see Genesis xlviii. 3, &c.) First of all he calls to mind the fact, that when he was a young man leaving his father Isaac's house, a revelation of the Divine glory had

been vouchsafed to him. "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me." That had, indeed, been a very memorable night, and it was not wonderful that the Patriarch should now revert to it. A lonely traveller, he had there at sunset chosen for himself a place to lie down upon. Hard as was the pillow on which his head rested, his sleep was sweet and his dream cheering. Then it was that he beheld, in a supernatural vision, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and on his ear a voice fell charged with gracious assurances. There, too, in the morning, he had entered into solemn covenant with the God who gave him songs in the night, and vowed that he would serve him with fidelity all the days of his life; and now, on his death-bed he makes grateful mention of this event, as if wishing to make it appear that he had no reason at the close of life for regretting the choice he had made at its commencement. Had there been any cause for lamenting that covenant which he had made with God, now would have been the time for declaring it. But reason of this sort there was none; for his sun was now going down in peace, and his last days were happier than his first.

Need we here stop to show that it is in like manner proper for dying Christians to call vividly up to their recollection the bygone instances of their Heavenly Father's care, their seasons of sweet communion with him, and their experiences of his loving-kindness. Is it not certain that oftentimes the withered cheek and the dim eye of such have been lighted up with something like celestial brightness, when the memory rested on that sacramental table, where, for the first time, they partook of wisdom's bread and

drank of the wine that she had mingled; that the tongue, faltering before, told eloquently of words and sentences indelibly inscribed upon the heart; and that prayers or exhortations which had come home powerfully to the youthful bosom were found to be still very edifying and comfortable to the aged saint? That singular event in Jacob's history resembles in many points a first communicating. Who, that possesses aught of religious feeling, can forget, or wish to forget, that important step in his spiritual history? Is it not true that with many, long and far back as may be the time, the occasion when they first formally dedicated themselves to the service of God is fresh as the events of yesterday; that they can tell almost the precise spot which they occupied; and that the hopes, the fears, and the purposes which they exercised are still vividly present to their minds? Perhaps you have, like Jacob, been faithful in the main to your solemn vows; and when you represent to yourselves the condition in which you then were placed, you are disposed like him to say, Almighty God blessed us in his house, and we felt as if it were indeed the very gate of heaven. If so, it will be no unsuitable exercise when you are about to die to tell your children, and children's children, that such was your experience, and such your happiness; you will in that case testify with your latest breath that no good thing failed which the Lord had promised you; that the service of God is the only one which can bring comfort at the last; and that all which you desire for those whom you love most dearly upon earth is, that they also may join themselves to him in a covenant not to be forgotten. Oh! it is pleasing, indeed, when the dy-

ing saint can thus meditate with composure upon the past, and turn to profitable consolation the texts of scripture which many years before engaged his attention in the sanctuary. How often have the Psalms of David and other sacred songs acquired in early life thus suggested the most delightful feelings! Has it not seemed as if the heart grew almost young again in dwelling upon those words spoken in season by lips long ago silent in the grave, and as if somewhat of heavenly strength were imparted to the feeble frame as memory brooded over the scenes of early piety!

Let young persons, then, be persuaded to lay up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. Consider ye, now, what it is that you are most likely to remember with comfort in old age, should you be spared to enter on it, or on your death-bed when you shall bid farewell to time. Not, most assuredly, the indecent jest, the profane sally, the lascivious song. No; it will be the memory of sacred truth, sound doctrine, well-paid vows. When did a man's heart ever reproach him, when he came to die, for having communed too frequently with God, for having stored his mind too richly with scripture truths, for having observed his Sabbaths too religiously, for having performed his closet duties too exactly? If you can produce even one solitary instance of this, walk without scruple or remorse after the counsel of your own hearts; but, if not, now be persuaded to "hearken and hear for the time to come."

Jacob, we also find, spake on that occasion of Rachel's death. "As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me by the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come

unto Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem." It was, indeed, exceedingly natural for Jacob in these circumstances to remember that event. And it may here be remarked, that it is proper enough for the dying to remember the dead. Jacob was now about to rejoin her from whom he had now for many years been divided. Their dust, indeed, was not to be mingled together, but their kindred spirits were shortly to be united beyond the grave. As it is consoling to the living when they commit the bodies of their relatives to the earth, to believe that they are not lost for ever; so is it encouraging to the dying to think that they shall soon be with those whom they once knew intimately and loved tenderly. This is one of those considerations that take away from the bitterness of death. When it seems to the dying man as if the once familiar hand were again extended to grasp his own, and as if the eye, brightened by its admission into glory, looked affectionately down upon him; it is as if a great part of the natural gloom with which death is associated were removed; even as the timid and the weak-hearted feel strong to enter the boat that is to convey them across the river on whose further shore love stands waiting their arrival. It is true, indeed, that there are far higher and holier considerations than these which ought to subdue in a good man's mind the immoderate dread of death. But neither is this to be despised. Perhaps it may even be said, that there are few, indeed, who have not in the hour of their dissolution been somewhat fortified by it. It is well when affection is engaged on the side of Piety. It is cheering to believe that at the

termination of the gloomy valley there are those with whom we once took sweet counsel, who once trod the same path, and now wait side by side with our elder brother to bid us a joyful welcome.

“ We fear not now—we fear not,
Though the way through darkness bends ;
Our souls are strong to follow them—
Our own familiar friends.”

In the discourse of the aged and dying Patriarch there are also prophetic anticipations in regard to his descendants. Having learned that his grandchildren were present, he stretches out his hands and blesses them. Guided by the spirit of heavenly wisdom, he places his right hand on the head of the younger, and his left on that of the elder. To Joseph, who supposed that the thing happened by mistake, it appeared unseemly that Ephraim should be set before Manasseh. But the thing was of God, and Jacob but pronounced the heavenly oracle. We are hence taught that in dispensing his favours, God does not always proceed according to what we deem the order of nature. He looks not on the outward appearance, nor judges according to man's judgment. The sacrifice of Abel, the younger brother, was accepted, while that of Cain, the elder, was rejected. Jacob himself was preferred to Esau. David the youngest of all his father's family was taken to be king of Israel. Thus does he confound the great things of this world, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

Aged saints are not now, as Jacob was, gifted with prophetic lore ; but it is proper for them to evince a lively interest in the welfare of their descendants.

Although they cannot predict what shall befall them in the latter days, they are called upon to give them what they have, their counsel and blessing. They may have no temporal inheritance to divide among them ; but they may at least bequeath to them the legacy of sound instruction. Surely with truth did the wise man observe, "Children's children are the crown of old men ; and the glory of children are their fathers."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

THE BLESSING.

"JOSEPH is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: from thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel :) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb; the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.—Genesis xlix. 22–26.

In addressing his beloved son Joseph, the aged and dying Patriarch had abundant reason to admire and adore the good Providence of God. That he actually did so, the words above quoted sufficiently show. First of all, he regards his present flourishing condition in the land of Egypt. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall." At another period of his life, however, he had been as a branch torn from the parent

tree, and flung recklessly to the earth. That he had not perished then in his apparent helplessness, was owing to nothing less than the watchful Providence of God, who had transplanted him into Egypt and nourished him there. Changing the figure, the Patriarch next alludes to the harsh treatment he had met with, before attaining the high honour with which he was now invested. "The archers sorely grieved him, they shot at him, and hated him." His own brethren had most maliciously persecuted him in early life, ridiculed his pretensions to eminence, and, finally, sold him for a contemptible price into the hands of the Ishmaelites. The wife of Potiphar had wrought him much additional mischief; the finest feelings of his nature had been shocked, his character injuriously defamed, and his prospects, just as they began to clear up, of a sudden darkened. Yet, notwithstanding all this, his destruction was averted, yea, his ultimate prosperity advanced. "His bow abode in strength, and his arms were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Under trials of far inferior severity, thousands would have sunk down in despair. But the faith of Joseph had not failed, nor did he let his integrity go. The very weights that threatened to crush him did but call forth the opposing energies of his character; and, having within him a good conscience, he had waited the issue with patience. Fortune did not make him great, but found him so. Had he even perished in the dungeon where he was unjustly confined, he would have been honoured by angels as a noble-minded man. His was the dignity of moral worth; and, in point of all that constitutes true greatness, no earthly monarch could compare with him. There is always some-

thing admirable in the struggles which principle makes against adversity. We find a pleasure even in looking upon the stately tree, that has for many successive winters stood in the face of those storms beneath which others have been driven prostrate to the ground ; or in contemplating the gallant ship, which has defied the fury of these elements that have scattered her sister voyagers into fragments on the waters. But these objects, interesting as they are, are but faint and poor emblems of the human mind beaten by the tempests of calamity, and yet maintaining its integrity. It was not, however, in virtue of his own native strength that Joseph had thus persevered in well-doing under adversities which thousands would have felt to be overwhelming. No—his bow abode in strength, because his arms were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. The grace of the most high was largely given to him, and by a divine light he walked through darkness. Abandoned to his own strength, he would have been utterly incompetent to resist the temptations by which he was assailed, or to exercise the virtue by which he was distinguished. But the spirit of wisdom was vouchsafed unto him from on high ; and no man who reads his history can doubt that his prayers at a throne of grace were both frequent and fervent.—Taking next into view the blessings which Joseph had been the instrument of procuring for his kindred, he describes him as the Shepherd and Store of Israel ; their shepherd, as he had provided for their comforts ; their store, as he had upheld and supported them in years of famine. Then, looking down by the eye of prophecy through the vale of fu-

ture time, he sees that the fame of Joseph shall continue to spread, that his progeny shall be numerous, and their fortunes illustrious. "The Almighty shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of thy progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."

In the preceding chapters we have had frequent occasion to point out resemblances between Joseph and our blessed Lord, nor may we now overlook some of those that are suggested by the passage in hand; for more emphatically may it be said of Jesus than of Jacob's son, that the archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. It was so at his birth, when Herod sought the young child to destroy him, and his mother had to carry him for safety into that very land which had so long before furnished an asylum to his Type. It was so when the tempter assailed him for forty days in the wilderness, and all the perverted ingenuity of the accursed fiend was exercised against his peace. It was so when his own brethren after the flesh taunted him with the obscurity of his birth, and contemptuously asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" It was so when, although he spake as never man did, they reviled him as a seducer of the people; when the most slanderous imputations were brought against his purity of motive and intention; when his very miracles, which could not be denied, were ascribed to the agency of Satan;

when his heavenly doctrine was set at nought, and his gracious invitations laughed to scorn ; when, instead of being welcomed as the benefactor of mankind, he was despised and rejected by the world which he came to save : “ The ploughers ploughed upon his back ; they made long their furrows. The wicked bent their bow ; they made ready their arrow upon the string. False witnesses rose up and laid to his charge things that he knew not. They that hated him without a cause were more than the hairs of his head.” But it was especially at the close of his sorrowful existence that the archers so sorely grieved him. Then every arrow that could work agony was let loose against him ; to say nothing of the contradiction of sinners and the malice of hell, he had to bear what was infinitely worse, the wrath of God. The sufferings inflicted on him by men and devils were indeed very painful and severe—the buffeting, the scourging, and the crucifying, were all very grievous to be borne ; but these are tortures which many righteous men and martyrs have sustained unshrinkingly. Had these been all we should have heard nothing about the travail of Christ’s soul. In that case it could not have been said that there never was sorrow like unto his sorrow. The prospect of these things could never have wrung from him the affecting prayer—“ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Ah no. The bitterness of that cup consisted in this, that the Lord God laid on him the iniquities of us all. It was because the arrows of Divine wrath fell thick as hail upon him that his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and that his sweat was like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Throughout all his previous life, indeed, he had been acquainted with grief, but now he *began* to be sore amazed. Terrible thought! he endured the wrath of God. This was the iron that entered deep into his soul. The ingenuity of men and of devils could not have devised such tortures as he endured when **THE LORD PUT HIM TO GRIEF**. The stroke that so heavily affected him was a stroke from heaven. The burden which he bore was the burden of atonement for the sins of many. It was this which extorted from him strong crying and tears. It was because he was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, that he cried out—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Far sharper than all the nails which tore his flesh were the arrows that pierced his soul. Then came to pass the saying which had been written—"Awake, oh sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow."

But notwithstanding all, **HIS BOW STILL ABODE IN STRENGTH**. The prince of this world could find nothing in him; the principalities of darkness could not turn him aside from rectitude. Even under that awful burden of Almighty wrath which pressed him to the very dust of death, he showed himself still mighty to save, and, in testimony that all power was his, he bore with him to paradise the soul of a penitent fellow-sufferer. The victory which he achieved was matchless. Angels looked with wonder down; and their song, even at this present hour, is of the Lamb that was slain—the man that was crucified in weakness but raised again with power.

Wherefore, we may well ask, was it that he was able to stand in the face of all this formidable opposi-

tion? It was because, in a pre-eminent sense, "his arms were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." The human nature had an infinite load to bear, but the Divine was indissolubly united to it. Jehovah the Father smote, but Jehovah the Son was smitten. Supported by his own Deity the Man stands under the stroke of omnipotence, and endures it in the greatness of his strength.

Joseph may, however, be regarded not only as a Type of Jesus himself, but as a Type of the Christian Church, which has often, like its Divine founder, been shot at by human malice and fiendish wrath. Many weapons have been formed against it, but they have not prospered. Although it is now more than eighteen hundred years since Jesus yielded up the ghost, his name is still in the world as ointment poured forth; and, although all conceivable methods have been employed to destroy it, the word of God grows and multiplies. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, and sooner shall earth and heaven pass away than a seed cease to serve him in the earth. The Church of Christ, as Leighton observes, "has often been brought to so obscure a pass, that if you can follow her in history it is only by the track of her blood, and if you can see her, it is only by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burned." But although the kings of the earth have often taken counsel together, and the people have imagined a vain thing, the purpose of the Lord has not been reversed. The religion of Jesus being of God, it cannot be overthrown. So long as men need salvation shall the name of Jesus be trusted in; one generation after another shall proclaim his

acts, and sing aloud of his righteousness. Race unto race shall tell, as race unto race has told, that there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. Empires shall rise and fall as they have done in ages past, but the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be held and proved to be that which alone can make nations prosperous or individuals happy. We, with our children and children's children, shall go the way of all the earth, but the blood that was shed on Calvary shall never cease to be remembered. Posterity to latest time shall assemble themselves to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him. Awakened consciences shall be soothed, and dying beds comforted with the doctrine of his atoning sacrifice; infants shall be held up to him in baptism, mourners shall bless his memory, old men shall declare his faithfulness, and a seed shall never cease to serve him. Often as the penitent remembers his sins he shall be gladdened with the tidings of Christ's salvation; often as the needy soul hungers and thirsts after righteousness, shall it be directed unto Him for the bread and the water of life. The gates of hell shall not prevail against his church. There shall ever be ministers at her altars, and communicants at her solemn feasts. Changes which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive of shall take place in the world, but none of them can render men independent of his salvation. Sinners shall still stand in need of a Saviour, mourners of a comforter, and dying men of immortality. The world at large shall undergo unthought of revolutions, but his gospel shall survive them all. Ancient thrones may be subverted and new dynasties succeed, the

glory of old kingdoms may depart and new ones arise in their stead, the tide of innovation may sweep away all the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set, but even on the uttermost bounds of the everlasting hills shall the standard of the cross be planted. "His name shall endure for ever. It shall be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call him blessed."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND.

DEATH OF JOSEPH.

THE character of Joseph comes, on the whole, perhaps as near perfection as ever any mere man in this life was able to arrive at. In every condition of life his piety and virtue appear to admirable advantage. As a young man in his father's house, as a slave in Egypt, in prison and in the palace alike, his works praised him highly. His trials were of a different complexion from those of his progenitors; but they were nobly borne, and advantageously improved. He is distinguished from many other eminent saints by the harmonious combination of many diversified excellences. Take almost any other illustrious character, and you will be sure to see in it some one particular point of goodness very prominently developed—so much so, indeed, as to contrast sometimes in a striking manner with imperfections and infirmities. Thus Abraham is remarkable for his faith, Moses for his meekness of spirit, Job for his patience, David for devotional feeling, and St Paul for persevering and ardent zeal. Not, indeed, that they were wanting in many other graces of the spirit, but that each of them is specially distinguished above his fellows by the liveliness of that one characteristic. But it were hard after all to determine positively for what particular exercise of virtue Joseph is most illustrious; for there is scarcely one excellence that

can be named, the features of which may not be visibly traced in him. Is it piety to God? You may observe its operation from his boyhood even until death. Is it integrity? His conduct in Potiphar's house, as well as in Pharaoh's palace, proves him to have had a conscience void of offence. Is it chastity? So long as the world lasts shall his behaviour be appealed to as the brightest illustration of a young man keeping himself unspotted from the world. Is it forgiveness of wrongs? His noble superiority to vindictive feeling is the best merely human testimony ever borne to the dignity of self-control and the amiableness of mercy. Is it tenderness of heart? Let the tears which he shed in secret, as well as those which he wept over the necks of his brethren, tell that scarcely ever since the world began was there about any ordinary descendant of Adam so fine a union of grace and greatness, of dignity and tenderness. Is it filial affection? Let his care of Jacob alive, and his regard for his memory when dead, be taken as the answer. Is it wisdom as a statesman, equity as a governor, or zeal for the welfare of a great nation with whose interests he was intrusted? The high favour in which he stood with Pharaoh, and the popularity of his administration in Egypt, alike show that his public as well as his private virtue was beyond the reach of suspicion. In short, both as a man and as a Governor, his excellencies appear to have been of the highest order, nor is it easy to say for what particular virtue more than another he is entitled to our admiration. It is this which, perhaps, as much as anything else qualifies him for being regarded as the most appropriate type of our blessed Lord. The more that his character is

examined, the more admirable does it seem ; and although there were doubtless many things even in him, arising from the corruption of human nature, which cost him secret uneasiness, yet, eminent as he was above all men then existing on the face of the earth, he was a living prophecy of the Great Deliverer who was to be, in all respects, holy, harmless, and undefiled.

As the early life of this remarkable person was distinguished by rare and admirable piety, his latter days were full of peace and hope. He was brought to death as a shock of corn in its season. Blessed by heaven with length of days, he was able to recount to "children of the third generation" the tender mercies of the Lord. Of him it might emphatically be said, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness." To him especially the words of the wise man were applicable, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And when at length the hour of his departure came, he took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, "God shall surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from hence." Thus did he evince lively faith in the promises of God. He desired his brethren to remember that Egypt was not the land of their rest, and that they should look, as his progenitors and himself had done, to a better country, that is an heavenly. St Paul expressly tell us that Joseph did this "by faith." Beyond all the honours to which he had been advanced in Egypt, he looked to higher objects. It was not that he disdained to be buried in the Egyptian territory, for he knew well that to the immortal spirit it was a light matter where the body might be

laid ; but thus he wished to intimate that he was an heir of the same promise that had gladdened the dying beds of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and he would have his kindred to cherish like himself the hope of a better resurrection. Thus, too, did he signify his own expectation of a coming Saviour. His had been a very useful and virtuous life, but on that he trusted not as the ground of acceptance with God. Like all the Patriarchs, he depended on the promise. His many virtues were satisfactory evidence of his meetness for the celestial state, but they could not give him any legal title to the inheritance. Had any man attempted to persuade him that they were meritorious, or that he might build upon them as the foundation of his hope, he would have scorned with sacred indignation the unworthy suggestion. But knowing that his Redeemer lived, he could depart in peace, and resign his spirit into the hands of a merciful creator. Mark, then, the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

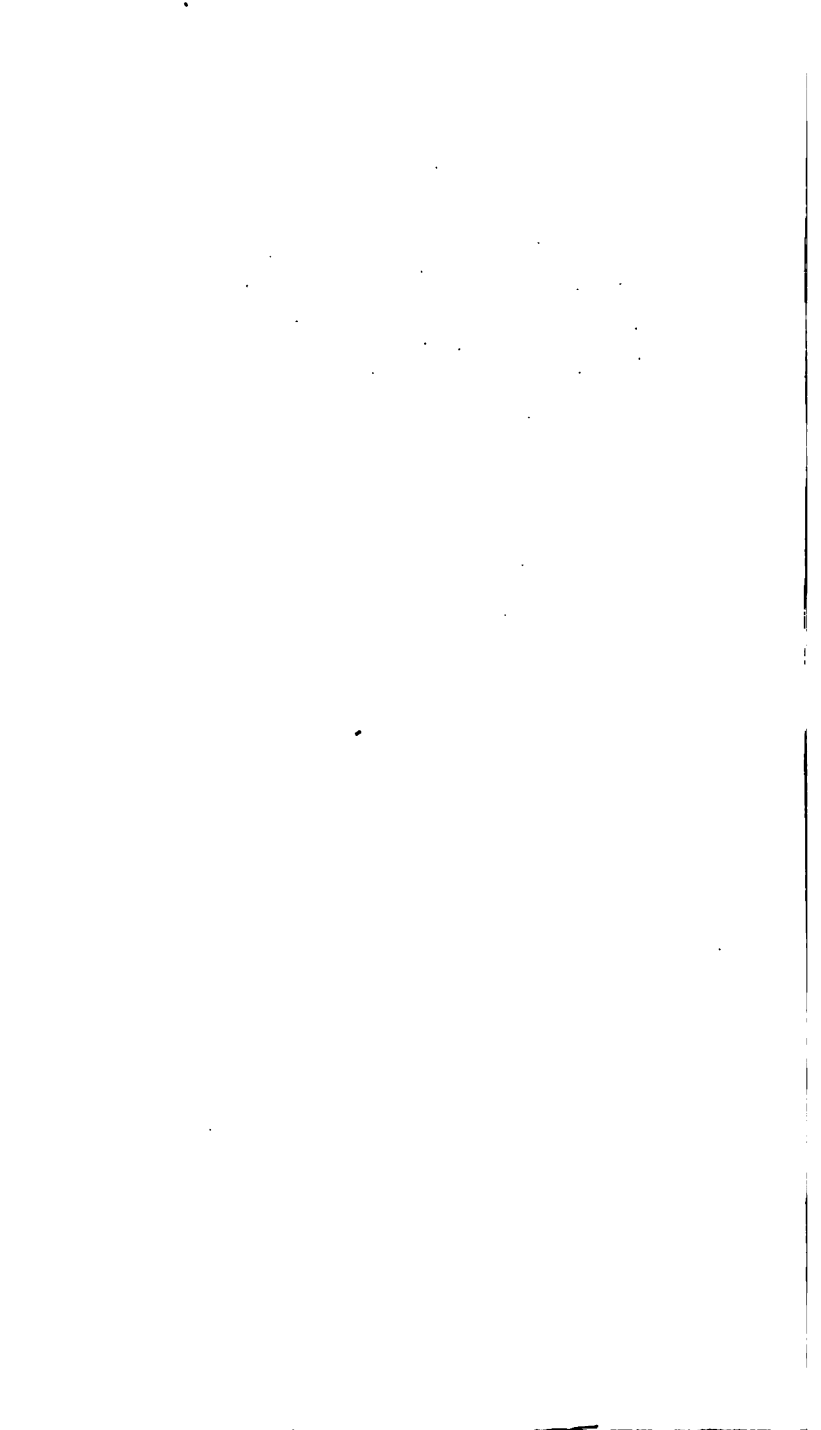
“ No smile is like the smile of death,
When all good musings past
Rise wafted with the parting breath,
The sweetest breath the last.”

The sacred historian has not told us of the grief and lamentation that must have filled the land of Egypt, when it became known that its illustrious benefactor had closed his eyes in death. We read only that “ they embalmed Joseph ; and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” But it cannot be doubted that the tears of a whole nation were shed over him, and that his memory was honourably cherished so long as

that dynasty existed. It was not until another king arose in Egypt which knew not Joseph, that his claims on that people were forgotten. Recent investigations render it highly probable that a revolution took place in the kingdom of Egypt; that a new line of princes ascended the throne; and that the effects of this were not less prejudicial to the ancient inhabitants of the land than to the descendants of Joseph. Be this, however, as it may, the name of Joseph shall continue to be revered so long as honour, integrity, and virtue, are esteemed in the earth. To latest time he shall be commended as a pattern of whatever is pure, lovely, and of good report. His memory is embalmed in the affections of all upright men in every corner of the globe. The simple narrative of his life is profitable alike to the young and the old, the mighty and the mean. From the study of it children may learn righteousness, and senators be taught wisdom. It is a perpetual commentary upon the saying, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

Blessed are all they who like him suffer at any time for righteousness' sake. Not more beautifully than truly has it been said, "The second days of virtue are pleasant and easy in the midst of all the appendant labours. But when the good man has finished his state of sorrows, then God opens the river of never-ceasing felicities. So much as moments are exceeded by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joys of an angel, a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, and a few groans by infinite and everlasting hallelujahs; so much are the sorrows of the godly to be undervalued in respect of what is deposited for them in

the treasures of eternity. Their sorrows can die, but so cannot their joys. And, if the blessed martyrs and confessors were asked concerning their past sufferings and their present rest, you should hear them glory in nothing but the mercies of God and the cross of the Lord Jesus. Now every chain is a ray of light, every prison a palace, every loss the purchase of a kingdom, every affront in the cause of God an eternal honour, every day of sorrow a thousand years of comfort, multiplied with a never-ceasing numeration, days without night, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envy, communication of joys without lessening ; and they dwell in a blessed country where an enemy never entered, and from whence a friend never went away." May it be ours, then, to walk in the footsteps of the flock, and to follow those who through faith and perseverance are now inheriting the promises !



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